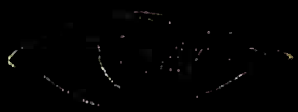

MAN, MYTH & MAGIC

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown

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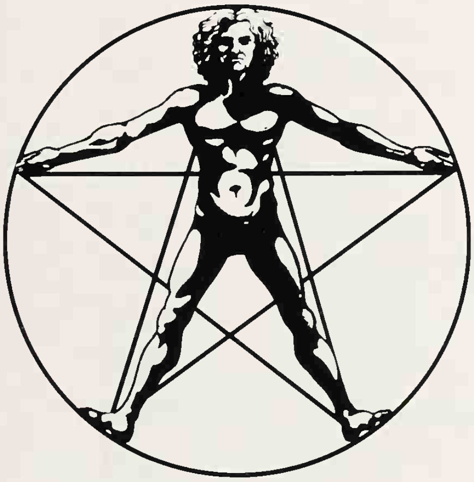

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion and the Unknown

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New Edition edited and compiled by
Richard Cavendish and Brian Innes

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Frontispiece: A bird that moves with confidence in the darkest night and, with its broad face, uncannily human in appearance, the owl has gained a sinister reputation, often being associated with death, mourning and evil (Eric Lindgren)

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NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

The heroic 'Red Indian' has become the subject of a whole mythology in American and European literature

'The world of the American Indians was once a rather lonely but free place where humans were close to Nature and followed a natural system of belief'; the spirits of ancestors, and personifications of the forces of Nature were the basic units of their religion, and every natural object might have a spirit which could be contacted

THERE HAS BEEN so much of a romantic aura surrounding our conceptions of the heroic 'Red Indian' that he has become the subject of a whole mythology in European and American literature. So many of our dreams of the free wild life were projected on the American Indians that they have in a sense become part of our unconscious mind; and so deep was the impression that many of the famous 'guides' of Spiritualist seances have taken on the semblance of monosyllabic warriors of the Great Plains. This is not altogether surprising since our ancestors of the later Paleolithic period nearly 40,000 years ago were living a life very much like that of the earliest Red Indians. Yet we are not directly connected, it appears, for these ancestral groups, who entered North America in ancient times, appear to have been 'mongoloids', and not unlike their modern descendants.

Recent discoveries in the United States suggest that there were humans in North America in the last inter-glacial period. A few hearths and rough stone tools have been found, but no definitely associated human remains were present, so we are still unaware of their appearance in those early days.

Masks with moving parts, representing half-human, half-animal beings, were featured in the ceremonies of the Indians of the north-west coast, who believed that both animals and men had souls and that there was only a slight barrier between them: hinged masks of the Kwakiutl tribe; closed they represent a serpent *(top)* and a bird *(below)*, and when the flaps are opened a human face is revealed

They were probably few in number in any case. Later there came many journeys from Siberia into America. Geologists have shown that in the last glaciation there was an ice-free area just to the east of the Rocky Mountains. A few families hunting deer, bear, and so on, could have trekked from Siberia over the Bering Strait, then a strip

The Ghost Dance Ceremony

The dance commonly begins about the middle of the afternoon or later, after sundown . . . the leaders walk out to the dance place, and facing inward, join hands so as to form a small circle. Then, without moving from their places they sing the opening song . . . in a soft undertone. Having sung it through once they raise their voices to their full strength and repeat it, this time slowly circling around in the dance. . . . As the song rises and swells the people come singly and in groups from several tipis, and one after another joins the circle until any number from fifty to five hundred men, women, and children are in the dance . . . At intervals between the songs, more especially after the trances have begun, the dancers unclasp hands and sit down to smoke or talk for a few minutes. At such times the leaders sometimes deliver short addresses or sermons, or relate the recent trance experience of the dancer . . . Old people hobbling along with sticks, and little children hardly past the toddling period sometimes form a part of the circle, the more vigorous dancers accommodating the movement to their weakness. Frequently a woman will be seen to join the circle with an infant upon her back and dance with the others, but should she show the least sign of approaching excitement watchful friends lead her away that no harm may come to the child. Dogs are driven off from the neighbourhood of the circle lest they should run against any of those who have fallen into a trance and thus awaken them. The dancers themselves are careful not to disturb the trance subjects while their souls are in the spirit world. Full Indian dress is worn, with buckskin, paint and feathers . . .

James Mooney *The Ghost-Dance Religion* (1896)

of dry land about 156 miles wide.

Their route would have been simply that of the migrating animals going further southward over the dry, windy and intensely cold lands towards the pastures south of Canada, which was then just a frozen wilderness. There was no general migration of peoples, just a few families passing from time to time. They must have had good skin clothing and stone-bladed spears and darts with which to kill their game.

From those ancient times there appear to be no remaining legends. Yet from two parts of the Far North folktales have been recorded which describe mammoth-like creatures. A number of tales have been collected from Alaskan Eskimo sources in which a great tusked land animal is described. From Labrador come other tales of enormous tusked creatures which destroyed trees by leaning against them. It is quite possible that the Indians of Labrador had heard such tales from the Norse sailors who visited their coast seeking for timber from the 11th to the 15th centuries, and there is plenty of archeological evidence to show that the Norsemen were acquainted with the Indian elephant. However, the Alaskan Eskimo tales suggest that there is a possibility that ancient tales, retold through the generations, actually included memories of long-extinct mammoths.

However that may be, there came a period in which North America became isolated from the Old World, when the warming of the climate released vast quantities of water from melting ice and so flooded the plain which is now the Bering Strait. After that there may have been a few migrations of people by canoe, although the voyage from the Old World to America by sea was generally impossible until comparatively late times.

The nature of American Indian life was largely conditioned by the terrain occupied by each of the many hundreds of tribes which had developed from the early migrants. The way of life of primitive hunters of the Stone Age persisted into recent times in the wild lands around Tierra del Fuego, and in the immense forests of Brazil where even stone was scarce. Among the poor tribes of the Californian desert life also remained primitive, and they subsisted on whatever animals and plants they could find in their hunting grounds.

When the English first arrived in America to establish the settlement of Roanoke, they took a close interest in the traditions and practices of the indigenous Indians, describing and recording them in considerable detail *Facing page* Sacred funerary building of the Natchez Indians; here the bodies of the dead were mummified by drying over a smoky fire and preserved on frames. 16th-century watercolour by John White, now in the British Museum

The whole way of life of American Indians was changed by the discovery of maize in northern Mexico in about 5000 BC. The grain took a long time to develop to the point where it became a staple food, but gradually the idea of agriculture spread from Mexico, as far south as the pampas of South America and as far north as the St Lawrence basin. Even the brave hunting peoples of the prairie grew crops of maize, beans and squash in the river valleys; and before they acquired the horse they lived more on the products of their fields than by hunting.

Weather Moons

The growth of agriculture brought with it a new development of science and religion. The farmer knows well enough when the crop is ripe for harvest, but the day for planting the seed has to be calculated with precision. The clue is to be found in the sky, in the passage of the sun through the stars of the zodiac which mark the passage of the year. The moon also is important, and the passage of the moons was noted by all American Indian peoples with great care. The moons were named according to the weather expected in the part of the year during which each was visible.

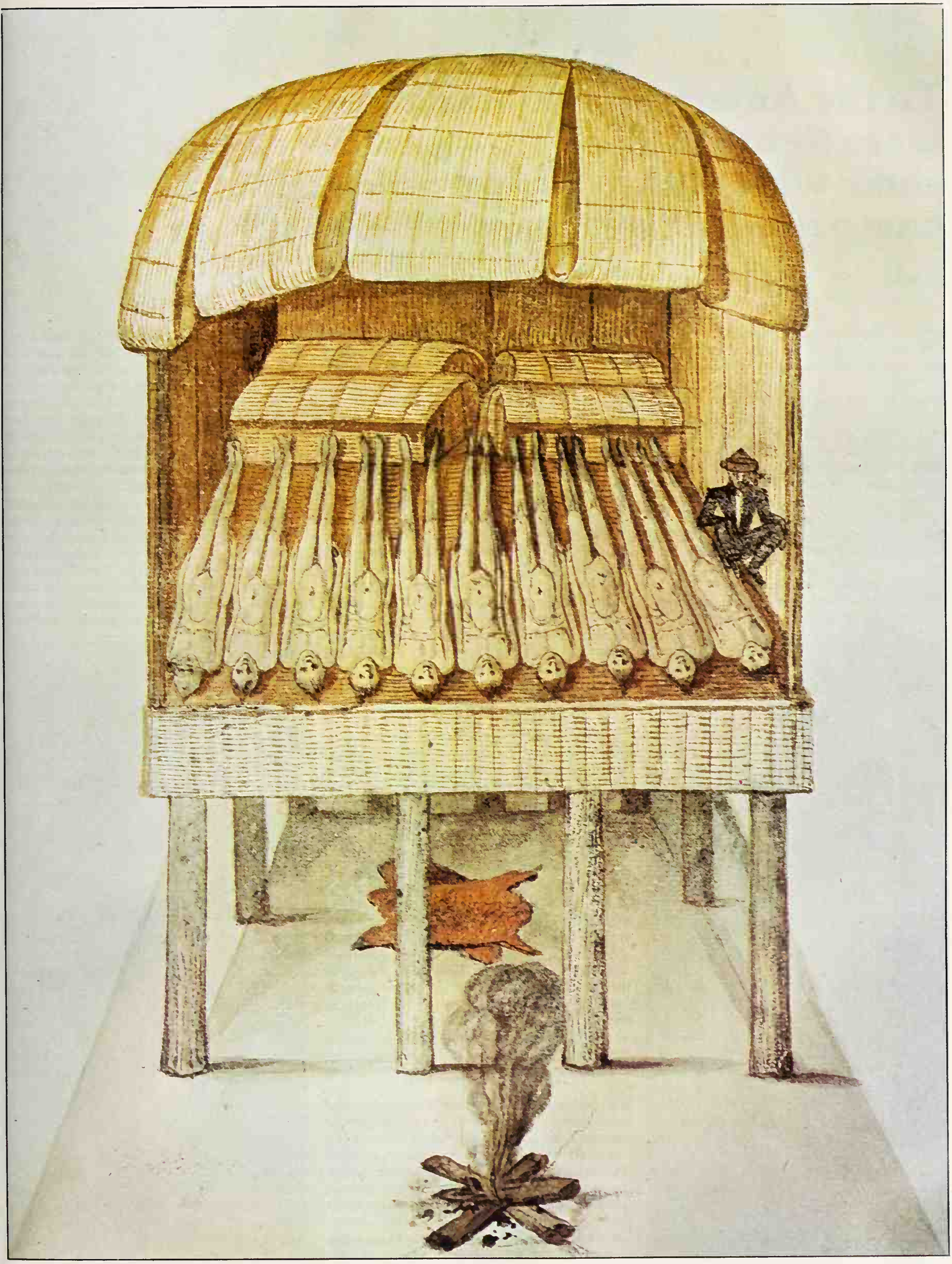
Aggression is characteristic of human beings, and there is a persistent tendency to make profit by seizing the valuable assets of other groups. The development of civilization in North America was continually hampered by the open nature of much of the country which permitted inter-tribal raiding and warfare to take place. The most peaceful regions were the desolate sea-hunting grounds of the Eskimo, the vast lonely forests in the north, and the mountains and deserts where the more primitive groups found some shelter from their more advanced predatory neighbours.

Every advance towards civilization was dependent upon the development of agriculture and the ability of the tribespeople to defend their livelihood. The greater centres of culture at the beginning of the Christian era, and perhaps a century or two earlier, lay in the middle Mississippi and Ohio river valleys. Here people made themselves towns of wooden and bark cabins around enormous earthen mounds which seem to have supported temples. The mound cultures of the Adena and Hopewell groups show a form of pottery and art which is roughly equivalent to that developed in European Neolithic settlements. Here for the first time are portraits of American Indians carved on tobacco pipes, and engraved on shells and copper plaques. The copper came from great boulders of natural pure metal found in the region of Lake Superior, and must have been obtained through trade with the tribes who lived near the deposits. There is no evidence of ability in smelting and casting metals, a process which seems to have been discovered far to the south in Panama.

What happened to these civilized Indian towns is not known. Maybe they were later disrupted by raids from the more primitive peoples of the plains. However, in the Pueblo area of the American south-west towns were built and survived. They started as agricultural villages in the river valleys but increasing drought made a concentration of people in the most fertile regions a necessity. The same cause brought several prairie tribes raiding the cultivated areas, so the local people built their stone and mud-block houses in caves and on the tops of the *mesas*, the high, rocky tableland of this region.

The most successful political organization of American Indians north of Mexico was that of the Iroquois who, in the 15th century formed a confederation of Six Nations. Their civilization was Neolithic and they lived in villages surrounded by fields and orchards, where they were organized well enough to fight off all other peoples until the white men came. Other civilized tribes, living in organized towns with a hierarchy of chiefs and officials, were found in the southern Alleghanies, and from northern Florida to the delta of the Mississippi.

They were all cultivators, living in wooden villages, and were usually at war with one another. There were so few natural boundaries in this area that it was not possible for any one tribe to remain unmolested and



Brompton Studio

To the American Indians the stars were lights in a world above the earth; some wise men said they were the camp fires of the tribes in the sky

advance in the arts of civilized life.

The development of a true civilization, though with the use of only stone tools, and no knowledge of wheels, occurred in Mexico. It began in the first millennium BC and after going through a series of periods of decline and revival it finally flourished under the military dictatorship of the Aztecs, whose capital city of Mexico housed nearly a million people at the beginning of the 16th century (see AZTECS; MEXICO).

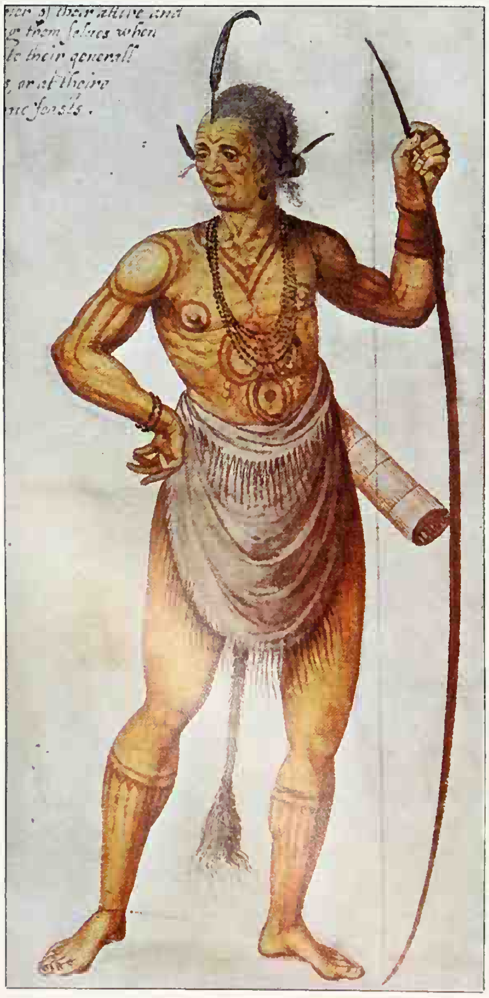
A study of American Indian religion shows that its complexity developed in line with the development of civilization. The basic units were the spirits of ancestors and personifications of forces of Nature such as wind, rain, thunder, and sun and moon. Every natural object might have a spirit which could be contacted. There were greater powers of creation and destruction worshipped among such people as the Eskimo, who regarded a Great Mother who lived under the sea as a giver of life in addition to sun and moon.

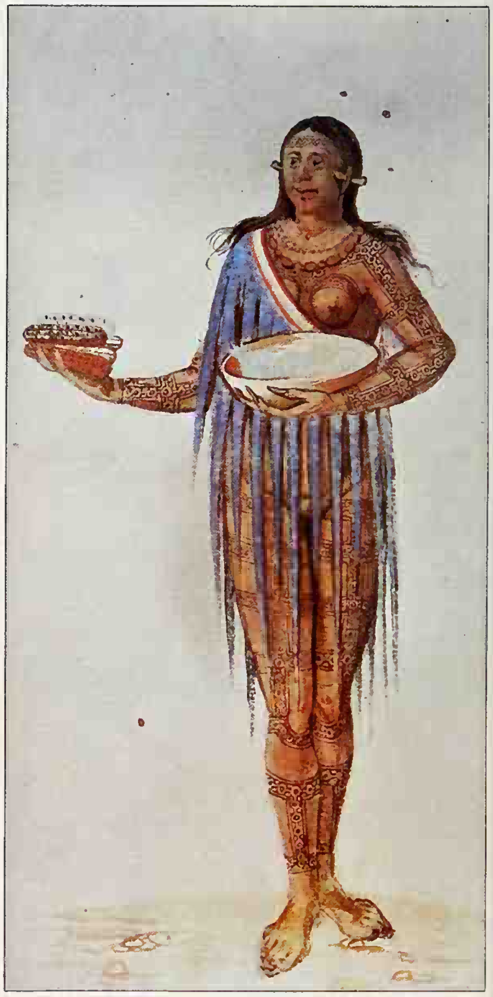
With the Eskimo, as with all other tribes, there was the need for day-to-day aid from the spirits. The nature of coming events was revealed through ecstatic visionaries, generally known as medicine-men because of their special functions as faith-healers. The main worship of the great natural forces usually took the form of a tribal ceremony at the appropriate season of the year. There was a great deal of self-torture by young men seeking to ensure success in war through pain. Most of the ceremonies lasted for four or five days, and everywhere the tribes had sets of carefully prescribed dances and chants to dramatize the occasion.

All American Indian religions were deeply influenced by the passage of the seasons. It was a necessity for the hunting tribes to be aware of the migrations of the animals, buffalo or salmon; and if at least the moon in which the migration could be expected was known, there would be time to prepare traps and snares, and gather supplies of arrows and spears. As a result, the successful medicine-man was likely to be a good astronomer.

The stars were lights in a world above the earth. Some wise men said they were the camp fires of the tribes in the sky. The sky land was a wonderful place, it was always summer there, and the souls of men and animals lived together without need to hunt and kill one another. There the sun had his house and the moon, who was often thought to be the younger brother of the sun, went on his regular journeys. Some of the stars were identified with deities, and the planets were thought to be great divine beings who wandered through the heavenly fields eternally acting out the drama of their lives. In particular, Venus usually had a dual character, being evil as the evening star and a power for good as the morning star.

The Pawnee a century ago still remembered the last occasion on which they had sacrificed a girl to the morning star. It was an ancient ceremony performed infrequently in times of trouble when the aid of this star was required. Being a cultured people, they would not sacrifice one of their own tribe but sent out a special expedition to kidnap a girl from one of the surrounding tribes. Once the captive had been taken she was treated with every consideration, given fine clothes and good food, and was never told the fate which awaited her. When the time came she was led out to a frame in the open air. Stripped





The wearing of clothing was not often considered a necessity by the Indians. They regarded garments primarily as an indication of social standing and personal importance within the hierarchy of the tribe: warrior (*left*) and a woman of Florida (*right*); beneath their minimal clothing they are both decorated with body paint, applied in formal designs. Two more of the watercolours executed by John White at the close of the 16th century

Brompton Studio

C. M. Dixon British Museum

C. M. Dixon British Museum

Far left **Animal spirits are important figures in American Indian belief: water jug in the form of an owl, a bird that plays a prominent role in the mythology of the Zuni tribe *Left* Mask worn by the Indians of the northwest Pacific coast**

naked, and painted half black and half red, she was tied to the framework. Then the young men danced and shot arrows at her. She was killed quite quickly and it was thought that her spirit would go to the morning star and intercede for the people. It was because they needed her help in this way that they had treated her well during the days of captivity.

Almost every tribe paid reverence to the morning star because this brilliant planet which heralded the sunrise was thought to have something miraculous and fortunate about it.

Old Woman's Grandson

From the Dakota come many star legends, and here the red star Aldebaran, one of the brightest in the heavens, took on a heroic aspect. This young star was the child of the sun and the lady Blue Star. One day he saw approaching him a white buffalo calf (the Pleiades) and wanted to hunt it. He looked around to find a sapling to make a spear, and pulled one up. He opened a hole in the sky world and looked down on the prairies and saw the Indians hunting game. The buffalo calf came near and charged so that he tumbled through the hole in the sky and fell to earth. There he was found by a poor old woman who was gathering firewood. She took him back to her home where she treated him well. People called him Old Woman's Grandson.

On earth he killed many strange monsters which had been troubling the Indians. He stopped the clashing rocks which killed everyone who travelled along the trail which led between them, by sending his dog to dash through the opening, after a huge bonfire had been lit on top of one of the peaks. The stone began to melt, and as the rocks tried to crush the dog they stuck together; they are now a natural rock arch through which people can pass in safety.

Then there was a terrible drought, and Old Woman's Grandson discovered that a great serpent had come up onto the land and was drinking all the rivers. He took his firesticks with him in a canoe, and was duly swallowed by the monster. He then made a fire and burned up its heart. When it was dead he cut his way out through the carcass, and released a great stream of water which became the Mississippi.

He saw the white buffalo calf again and knew that he must hunt it once more and follow his destiny. So they ran across the prairie and came to the edge of the sky where they chased onwards and at last returned home in peace. Old Woman's Grandson was once more in his starry home and was greatly honoured because he had helped the Indians to live without fear.

The earth itself was thought to be a great turtle floating in the endless ocean. Some tribes believed it had been brought to the surface directly by the gods, others thought that diving ducks had brought earth from beneath the sea and piled it on the back of the great turtle, until a mountain was made from which earth spread to make the plains and valleys.

Special animals and birds were reared as sacrificial offerings and messengers to the gods. The Pueblo sacrifice of tame eagles once a year is a case in point. All tribes south of the Great Lakes cultivated tobacco, and it was regarded as a way of making contact with the Power Above, who white men call the Great Spirit. The smoke of the tobacco went upwards bearing prayers and wishes from people on earth, but the American Indian developed no tobacco habit. It was used at conferences to bring about a state of peaceful intent so that discussions could be started without anger. Thus it was used in the pipe-of-peace to symbolize the quiet friendship which would replace war.

In the south-eastern United States there was a charming legend of the origin of tobacco. A young man and his beloved were walking one summer, naked except for their moccasins as was usual in warm weather. They found a patch of scented grass and lay down together. Each was beautiful, and admiring each other they joined together in sexual partnership. It was so beautiful an experience that they remembered it and at the same time the following year they returned to seek the place where such happiness was found. There they found a strange plant growing with beautiful scented flowers. It was the first tobacco plant, the bringer of peaceful happiness. Hence for all future people tobacco was to be a holy plant and the bringer of peace.

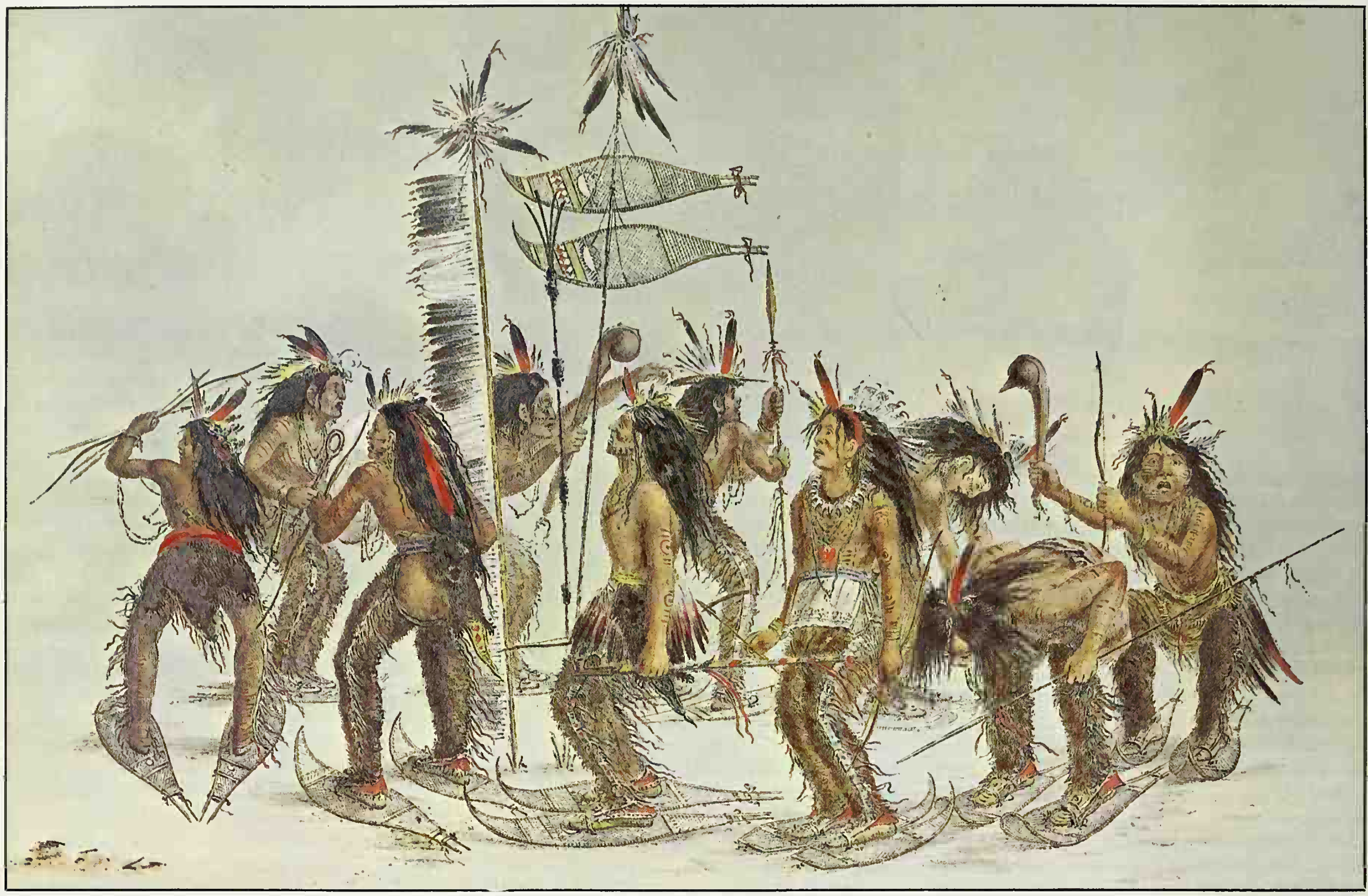
Hallucinatory drugs were but rarely used among the North American Indians. Only in the 19th century was the mild narcotic, peyote (see PEYOTE CULTS), introduced from Mexico. It became an important source of visions in the Ghost Dance cult (see GHOST DANCE) but it seems that the expectation of the dreams was more important than any narcotic contained in the peyote. Much more important in rituals were the emetics which cleared the stomachs of those seeking visions, before which the whole person had to be emptied and cleansed. Many quite ordinary people participated in the great ceremonies, at least at the beginning of the year, and danced and took the magical drinks. They chose to take part because of a personal need of enlightenment from the powers above.

Women might occasionally come as assistants to the religious ceremonies, but they usually did not take part actively in the ritual. It was not for them, they thought, to participate in the sky ceremonies. Within themselves they held the powers of the Earth Mother who gave them the blessing of motherhood, and the magic which brought peace to their menfolk. When they painted themselves it was more for beauty, than for the symbolism in which their more brilliantly painted husbands gloried.

Because of the wide differences in cultural needs, a considerable variation in religious beliefs may be observed among the pre-Columbian groups of Indians. On the whole this is most closely represented in the creation myths. The more primitive groups generally regarded the first ancestors as having been created by the Power Above, sometimes by direct bringing into being; but in other myths they were thought of as having been carved or modelled by divine powers and given life by a special god who might be an adversary of the Great Creator.

Among some peoples several different explanations were given of the origins of the ancestors. In general the more advanced agricultural peoples developed a religion which saw their forefathers as emerging from a prehuman animal condition. These legends usually tell of an emergence in stages from one land beneath the earth to another, ever ascending towards more perfect humanity and the light of the sun. The Pueblo and Navaho Indians believed their homeland to have been the first created place, where they had always existed.

Most of the tribes had a belief that mankind had once been threatened by a terrible flood. Whether this is a folk-tradition from



Hamlyn Group Library/British Museum

the days when the ice sheets were melting is not clear, but it seems to have been current among many tribes before they came into contact with Europeans, though later the legend was slightly altered to suit the book of Genesis and the story of Noah. The Mandan of the upper Missouri preserved a ring of planks which they believed to be relics of the Great Canoe in which their ancestors gathered on a hill top, just before the encroaching waters were stayed and then began to recede.

Sacred Houses

All American Indians had faith in charms and amulets, which were revealed in visions. The dreamer would find a similar object in his waking life and keep it in his personal medicine bag. Some objects were so sacred that they were kept in tribal medicine bundles which were passed from hand to hand over the centuries. It was the spirit and the symbol, not the object, which had power for the Indians.

After the 16th century the Plains tribes, who became dependent more on their hunting ability than on the gardens tended by their womenfolk, were obsessed with rituals of hunting and war. The young men were organized into religious confraternities which, by means of prayer, self-torture and dramatic representational dance, encouraged the guardian spirits to bring the tribe abundance of food, and victory in adversity. The leaders were elderly chiefs who knew the proper ritual for every occasion in all its complex detail. The young initiates wandered naked and alone in the prairie, fasting until they were given visions in which they saw their future spirit protectors. These directed them into ways of life which, in effect, determined which magic society they should join.

The rituals of these hunting tribes were more public, and more of a mass festival, than those of the agricultural people who tended to hold their principal ceremonies within a sacred house where they were visible to initiates only. Among the Pueblos the rituals were performed in circular underground chambers called *kivas*, which were decorated with paintings of the gods concerned in the ceremonies. Among the Iroquois the meetings were held in long houses of elm bark which were reserved for the tribal elders.

Such segregation of ritual from the mass of the tribe was bound to lead eventually to the growth of religious orders, in which a priesthood of men dedicated to certain deities was developed. The temple with its subsidiary buildings and priest-houses, which was the end product of this development, was only fully developed in Mexico. Among the northern Indians, such people as the Natchez of the lower Mississippi valley developed a structured society in which the highest class was of chiefs and priests who were called 'suns'. They led the nation in war and directed all tribal activities. The priests were specialists within the upper social group, and tended the temples, performed ceremonies including sacrificial offerings to the gods, and made deities in wood and clay.

Somewhat similar but less highly organized cultures flourished among the Creek, Cherokee and Choctaw Indians of the hill country of the south-eastern United States. They lived in villages built along trackways which joined one town with another. These tribes were advanced in a Neolithic phase of culture, having well-organized plantations of maize, beans, pepper and squash. There were sufficient deer and wild pigs to give some meat in their diet, and fishing was abundant in the many rivers of their country. They had to resist forays from their neighbours and even from the more distant tribes of the prairies, some of whom, like the Pawnee, were related to them. They built temples on mounds, and their gods were served by specialist priests. The passage of the year was marked by a regular series of ceremonies which were expected to bring blessings from the powers of sky and earth.

Everywhere the sun was the most important visible entity, and the moon a changeable secondary power. The earth and her fruits were holy and offerings were made. On the whole, rituals for the sun and sky spirits involved self-inflicted pain, and earth ceremonials involved sexual rituals which included public intercourse by chosen young people. In such ceremonies there was no idea of decency or indecency; the action was holy and part of the world of Nature through which came all the gifts from the gods to their human supporters.

A quite distinct culture in North America was centred on the North Pacific coast where

Most tribes believed that spirit protectors in the form of animals could be acquired by young men through fasting and self-torture

Carved kachina doll, painted to resemble one of the supernatural beings impersonated by masked dancers in Pueblo tribal ceremonies *Facing page* Chippewa dance of thanksgiving to the Great Spirit for the arrival of the winter snow

Horniman Museum

a high degree of comfortable village life was achieved without the practice of agriculture. The reason for this unusual state of affairs was that abundant supplies of sea food and wild berries made it possible for people to settle in permanent villages. They carved wooden utensils, built houses and dug canoes out of the great trunks of Douglas fir trees. There was a strong belief in the relationship between human and animal relatives, and tales concerning these were told in the form of ceremonial plays during the winter nights. The idea of the totem (see TOTEM) was more important in this region than in any other part of North America.

Most tribes believed that spirit protectors in the form of animals could be acquired by young men through fasting and self-torture. Such animal-souls occasionally took possession of a skin carried by the owner, and acted as oracles ever ready to help with advice and even a little magic. In some ways they may be compared to the familiars that were said to help European witches.

There was much variation in language and costume in the widely scattered tribes. There were some 700 languages, which were divided into slightly more than 20 linguistic groups, some of them as different in type as are Latin and Mandarin Chinese. Communication between tribes was often conducted in sign language which became a regular inter-tribal code of signals in areas like the Great Plains. Some peoples used picture writing and sometimes symbolic objects such as strings of wampum beads to convey history and information. But it was not until the early 19th century, under European influence, that the first truly American Indian alphabet was invented, adapted to suit the Cherokee language.

Clothing was also influenced by the European settlers, and pictures of the 19th century show that the skin gowns of the squaws on the prairie reflected something of European fashion. But none of the American Indians felt clothing to be a necessity. Rather it was a way of marking social status, and a means of proclaiming individual importance.

Among the Eskimo, clothing was tailored from warm skins, but indoors they generally stripped naked. The women of the prairie had wrap-around skirts and sometimes long gowns held at the sides by a girdle, while men wore a loin cloth. Both sexes had skin blankets to keep them warm when sitting down in the colder weather. In warm weather men and women might go naked in the camp without any comment. Among the Pueblo Indians there was a somewhat similar situation, though girls were presented with a blanket woven by their husbands when they married, and continued to wear such a garment from then on. They went naked before marriage. In early times all tribes wore sandals, but moccasins and short boots were evolved later.

The American Indians of today, although often treated with grave injustice, have tended to become assimilated into the surrounding way of life, although on ceremonial occasions many of them don what they consider to be traditional costumes, and perform dances of ancient origin. Even the Eskimo have adopted framed wooden double-walled houses and motor boats as standard tools of living.

In the reservations Indians try to combine modern necessity with old custom, and many have become indistinguishable from poor whites. They are probably as numerous as they were in ancient times, though many tribes became totally extinct as a result of the bitter wars of the 17th to the late 19th centuries. Even the old locations of the tribes have been disrupted because of the wholesale deportations which characterized the occupation of the prairies by farming communities. But in ancient times the population of North America was small and scattered, and even the Iroquois who occupied nearly all of what is now New York State numbered only about 20,000 persons.

The world of the American Indians was once a rather lonely but free place where humans were close to Nature and followed a natural system of belief. The wars and raids, which became so terrible when horses and arms were obtained from the European settlers, were on a fairly small scale in earlier days, and it is possible that the toll of human sacrifice was almost equal to that of war. But it must be remembered that the primitive life of even the civilized tribes was hard and often unhealthy. Their condition must be equated with that of the various tribes of western Europe from 10,000 to 1,000 BC.

(See also ALGONQUIN INDIANS; ESKIMO; GREAT PLAINS INDIANS; IROQUOIS; NAVAHO; PACIFIC NORTH-WEST INDIANS; PUEBLO INDIANS.)

C. A. BURLAND

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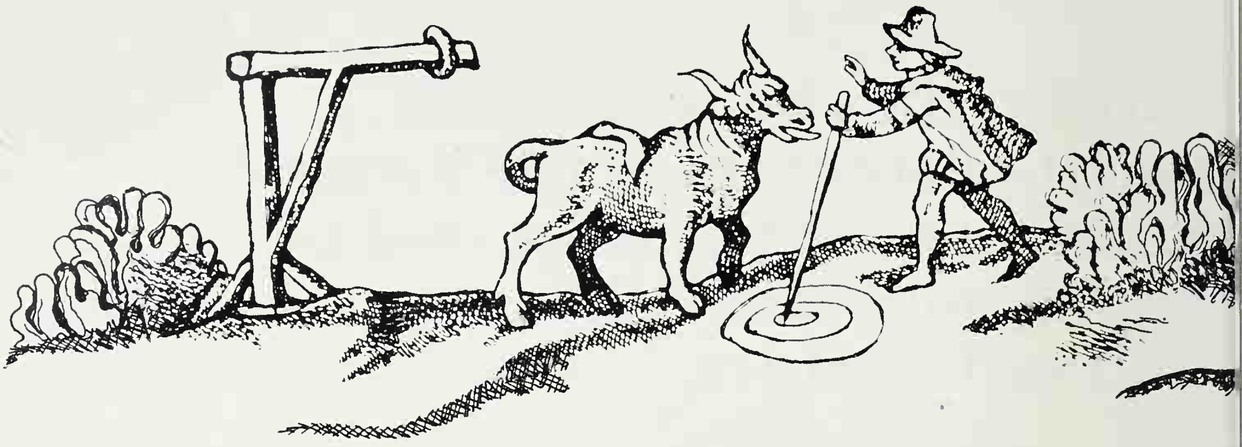


The Earl of Bothwell, cousin of James VI of Scotland, has been suspected of using witchcraft in his attempts to gain the Scottish throne; certainly the witches accused in the North Berwick trials confessed to attempting to kill the King by magic at the behest of the 'Devil'

NORTH BERWICK WITCHES

THE CELEBRATED CASE of the North Berwick witches, with its mixture of politics, high treason, and sorcery, is one of the most interesting in the annals of Scottish witchcraft. According to *News from Scotland*, a contemporary pamphlet published in 1591, the existence of these witches was discovered when David Seaton, the Deputy Bailiff of the town of Trenent, noticed that his maidservant, Gilly (or Geillis) Duncan, was behaving rather oddly.

She had taken to absenting herself from his house at night without permission, and she had suddenly acquired a local reputation for healing the sick. When Seaton questioned her about these alleged cures, she refused to answer, and he resorted to torture. The author of *News from Scotland* says that he used 'the pilliwinks upon her fingers, which is a grievous torture; and binding and wrenching her head with a cord, or rope, which is a most cruel torment also; yet would she not confess anything.' It was not until she had been searched for the Devil's Mark, and something supposed to be that mark had been found upon her throat, that she broke down and acknowledged that she was a witch.

After she had made this confession, Gilly Duncan was committed to prison, and there she named and accused a number of other people. David Seaton must surely have been horrified at the outcome of his examination of a maidservant in his own home, as slowly there came to light, not only the practice of dark magic by bands of local witches, but, more serious still, a murderous plot against the life of James VI.

The instigator of this plot was said to be Francis Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, who was the King's cousin and had some claim to the throne of Scotland if James should die without an heir. He was suspected of being the 'Devil' of the covens concerned, and of having been present, in ritual disguise, at their meetings.

It is quite possible that both these accusations were true. He and the King were at constant enmity with each other. James's death could have put supreme power within Bothwell's grasp, and he was reputed to be deeply interested in occultism and magic. He may in fact have attempted to clear his way to the throne with the help of the North Berwick witches, as some of the evidence given in the trials that followed suggests. If he did, he escaped the worst consequences of his guilt, although he was eventually forced to flee Scotland and take refuge in Italy, from which he never returned. While he lived there, he seems to have continued to dabble in various forms of sorcery. In his *Relation of a Journey* (1623), George Sandys makes the interesting statement that, when he was travelling in Calabria in 1610, a man whom he met 'would needs persuade me that I had insight in magic; for that Earl Bothel was my countryman, who lives at Naples, and is in these parts famous for suspected necromancy.'

Of those named by Gilly Duncan, only four were brought to trial: Dr John Fian (or Cunningham), a young schoolmaster; Euphemia Maclean, Lord Cliftonhall's daughter; Barbara Napier, the only one of the four whose life was to be spared; and Agnes Sampson, a midwife of Keith, well known in her own district as a wisewoman and healer of the sick.

John Fian appears to have been one of the officers of the North Berwick organization, being, as he acknowledged in his confession, 'clerk to all those that were in subjection to the Devil's service.' He kept a list of their names, took their oaths, and 'wrote for them such matters as the Devil still pleased to command him.' It was stated in evidence that he was always present at the meetings and stood nearest to the Devil, 'at his left elbow'; at the great gathering on All Hallows Eve, 1590, he was the leader of the dance for which Gilly Duncan provided the music, playing upon a Jew's harp.

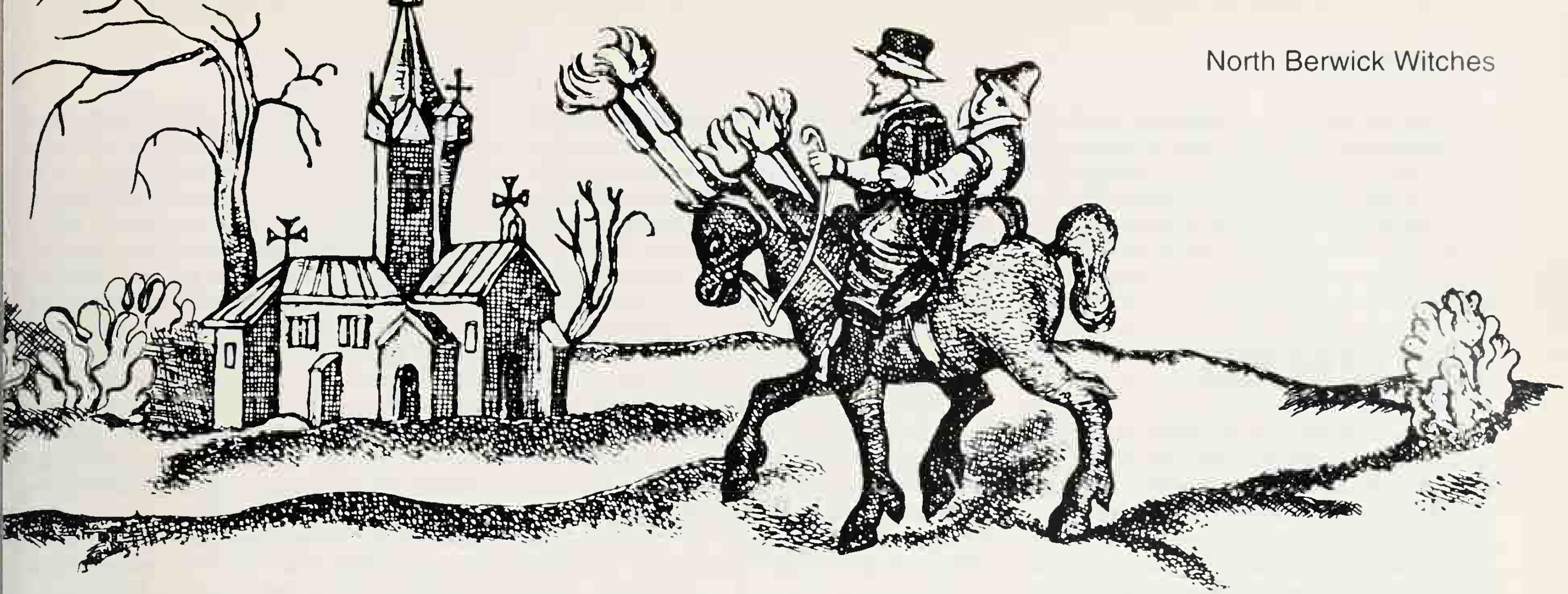
When Fian was first examined, he denied all the charges brought against him, but after being horribly tortured he confessed and signed his confession in the presence of King James. He is said to have implicated Bothwell directly in some of his admissions, and afterwards to have bitterly regretted having done so, but this cannot now be proved because the original document has been lost. That night he was left alone in his cell to recover from the effects of the torture. According to *News from Scotland*, he had sincerely repented his past evil and was anxious to make his peace with God. Next morning, he told his jailers that the Devil had come to him during the hours of darkness, dressed all in black and carrying a white wand in his hand, and had demanded that he should renew his former vows of service. Fian refused, declaring that he had listened to him too much already, and was now utterly undone in consequence. The Devil replied, 'Once ere thou die, thou shalt be mine', and so saying, he broke his white wand, and vanished.

This is an odd tale, of which, at first sight, the most likely explanation seems to be a nightmare, or delirium caused by the dreadful treatment he had received. Dr Margaret Murray, however, in *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, suggests that the visitor was human, either Bothwell himself or one of his messengers, and that he came to make arrangements for Fian's escape. It is a fact that, after another day of solitary confinement, Fian did escape, but instead of going into hiding he went quietly back to his house, and there remained until, inevitably, he was recaptured.

But by then he was changed. Somehow, in that brief interval, he had gained a new and unshakable courage. He denied all that he had confessed before, declaring that it had been wrung from him only by the fear of pain. He was tortured again most brutally in the hope of breaking down his resistance, but in spite of this he refused to answer any further questions, or to say anything more. He died, still silent, in January 1591, being first strangled and then burnt on the Castle Hill in Edinburgh.

Calling Up a Storm

Agnes Sampson was a witness of a totally different kind. It is true that, like Fian, she confessed nothing until she had been brought low by torture, but then she spoke freely, being, as we are told in one account, 'grave and settled in her answers, which were all to some purpose.' She acknowledged that she and certain named companions had conspired against the King's life on more than one occasion. When he was in



Above, left to right **One of the witches uses his magical powers to heal a sick cow; North Berwick church, one of the meeting-places of the coven; Dr Fian riding a horse which has the Devil's candles between its ears**

Denmark and about to return from there with his newly-wed wife, she was present at a meeting specially convened for the raising of a great storm at sea, whereby the royal ships might be destroyed. The method employed for this was to christen a cat, pass it three times through the links of the chimneycrook and three times under the chimney, and then bind on to its four feet 'the chiefest part of a dead man and several joints of his body.' When this horrible ceremony had been duly performed, the poor creature was carried to the pier at Leith, and hurled into the sea, as far as the witches could throw it. A storm sprang up immediately, and a boat then coming from Kinghorne to Leith was sunk, but the spell was apparently not strong enough to sink the King's ship which, though much troubled by contrary winds and bad weather, came safely back to Scotland.

The venom of a toad, mixed with other poisons, was tried also. A black toad was hung up by its feet for three days, and its venom carefully collected as it dropped into an oyster shell. The concoction was kept until a piece of old linen which had once been worn or used by the King could be obtained. Upon this it was proposed to smear the venom and so poison the victim through the medium of the cloth that had once been in contact with his body. The plan failed because John Kers, one of James's servants, of whom Agnes had begged such a fragment, refused to give it. Had he done so, she said, she could have killed the King with such pains 'as if he had been lying upon sharp thorns and ends of needles.'

The witches then resorted to the age-old practice of image-magic. Agnes Sampson told her examiners in Holyrood Palace that she had been instructed by the Devil to make a wax image of the King. This she did, and brought it, wrapped in a linen cloth, to a secret meeting held by night. Only nine other witches were present beside herself, and 'the Devil, their master... standing in the midst of them.' She offered him the image for his inspection, and when he had approved it, he returned it to her. It was then passed from hand to hand round the company, each person saying in turn: 'This is King James the Sixth, ordained to be consumed, at the instance of a noble man, Francis Earl Bothwell.' If John Fian had been deeply troubled by the fear that he might have implicated his master in his confession, it seems evident that Agnes Sampson had no such scruples.

From her, and later from Euphemia Maclean and Barbara Napier, the interrogators heard accounts of the great assembly at North Berwick Church on All Hallows Eve. Witches commonly met in the open air, often by standing-stones or some other traditional site, but in winter they sometimes met in houses or, if the gathering was a large one, in the local church.

A considerable number of witches were present, seven score according to Barbara Napier, 200 according to Agnes Sampson. They came by sea, making merry on the way with flagons of wine. They danced round the churchyard to Gilly Duncan's music, singing as they went:

Cummer, go ye before; Cummer, go ye;
If ye will not go before, cummer, let me.

When King James heard this, he sent for Gilly Duncan, and made her play the dance tune for him upon a trump similar to the one she had used at North Berwick.

Under God's Protection

The Devil presided over the gathering in the form of a man wearing a black gown and a black hat. He may have worn a mask also, for his face is said to have been terrible, with great burning eyes and a nose like the beak of an eagle. His hands were hairy and had claws on them and his feet were like those of a griffin. Barbara Napier said that he was bearded like a goat, and had a long tail. All made their homage to him, coming and going, saluting him on departure with the posterior kiss. Inside the church, he stood in the pulpit, with black candles burning round him, and called the roll, each person answering to his or her name with 'Here, master!'

He preached to his followers concerning the obedience they owed him and the evil they ought constantly to do; more particularly, he urged them to work evil upon King James, who was the greatest enemy he had in the world. He enquired what success had been achieved by the melting of the waxen image Agnes Sampson had made, and when an old ploughman named Gray-Meill tactlessly remarked that 'Nothing ailed the King yet, God be thanked', he struck him a fierce blow with his clawed hand. When some of the witches asked how it was that all their magic had so far failed against the King, though it had not against others, the Devil rather curiously replied that it was because James was a man of God.

To all this, and much else that was marvellous and improbable, the King listened until, suddenly losing patience, he declared that the witches were 'all extreme liars'. Then followed one of the most extraordinary incidents in this very odd case. Agnes Sampson said she did not wish him to think that her words were false, and to convince him of their truth, she would tell him something that he could not doubt. And drawing him a little aside, she whispered to him the words that had passed between him and his bride, Anne of Denmark, when they were alone on their wedding-night in Oslo.

No one knows why she did this. His incredulity must have seemed like a door opening on the hope of pardon and release, and that door she deliberately closed upon herself and her fellow-prisoners. She was, as far as we know, quite sane, nor does she appear to have been one of those individuals who will confess to anything. The startled King acknowledged that what she told him was quite true, and that she could not have known it by any normal means. 'All the devils in Hell,' he said, 'could not have discovered the same'; nor is it clear, even now, how she came by her secret knowledge.

The effect of the disclosure was, of course, fatal. James, forced to accept one part of her confession, was now ready to accept the rest. She was convicted and, in due course, executed on Castle Hill, and so, some time later, was Euphemia Maclean. Barbara Napier was condemned also, but was eventually released. With the subsequent flight of Lord Bothwell, the North Berwick case ended, for though many others were involved, and their names were known to the authorities, none was brought to trial thereafter.

CHRISTINA HOLE

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Astrologer and physician, Nostradamus (Michel de Nostredame) was born at St Remy in Provence in 1503. Although he achieved renown during his lifetime – he became the adviser and confidant of Catherine de Médicis, who had a weakness for the occult – his perennial fame is due to the extraordinary collection of rhymed prophecies that are associated with his name

NOSTRADAMUS

MICHEL DE NOSTREDAME was born at midday on 14 December 1503 in the little Provençal town of St Rémy-en-Crau, about forty miles northwest of Marseille. His parents, who came of Jewish stock, were converted to Christianity; his grandfather, Jean de Saint-Rémy, was physician and astrologer to the exiled court of King René of Anjou.

A very intelligent boy, Michel was at first educated at home by his grandfather, but later attended school in Avignon, and from there went on to study medicine at the university of Montpellier. After qualifying as a physician, he set out through southern France, wandering as far west as Bordeaux, and perhaps as far east as Savoy, treating patients as he went and earning a reputation as a plague doctor.

He returned to Montpellier in 1529 to receive his doctorate, but by 1533 he was on his travels again, and by 1536 he had settled in Agen – about 60 miles southeast of Bordeaux – where he married, sired two children and established a medical practice. Only two years later, however, he was summoned before the Inquisition in Toulouse, probably because of his association with a known heretic; on his return he found his wife dead of the plague, and both children died soon after. By 1545 he had returned to Marseille, and in 1547 he married a wealthy widow and moved to Salon, not very far from his birthplace, where he lived for the rest of his life.

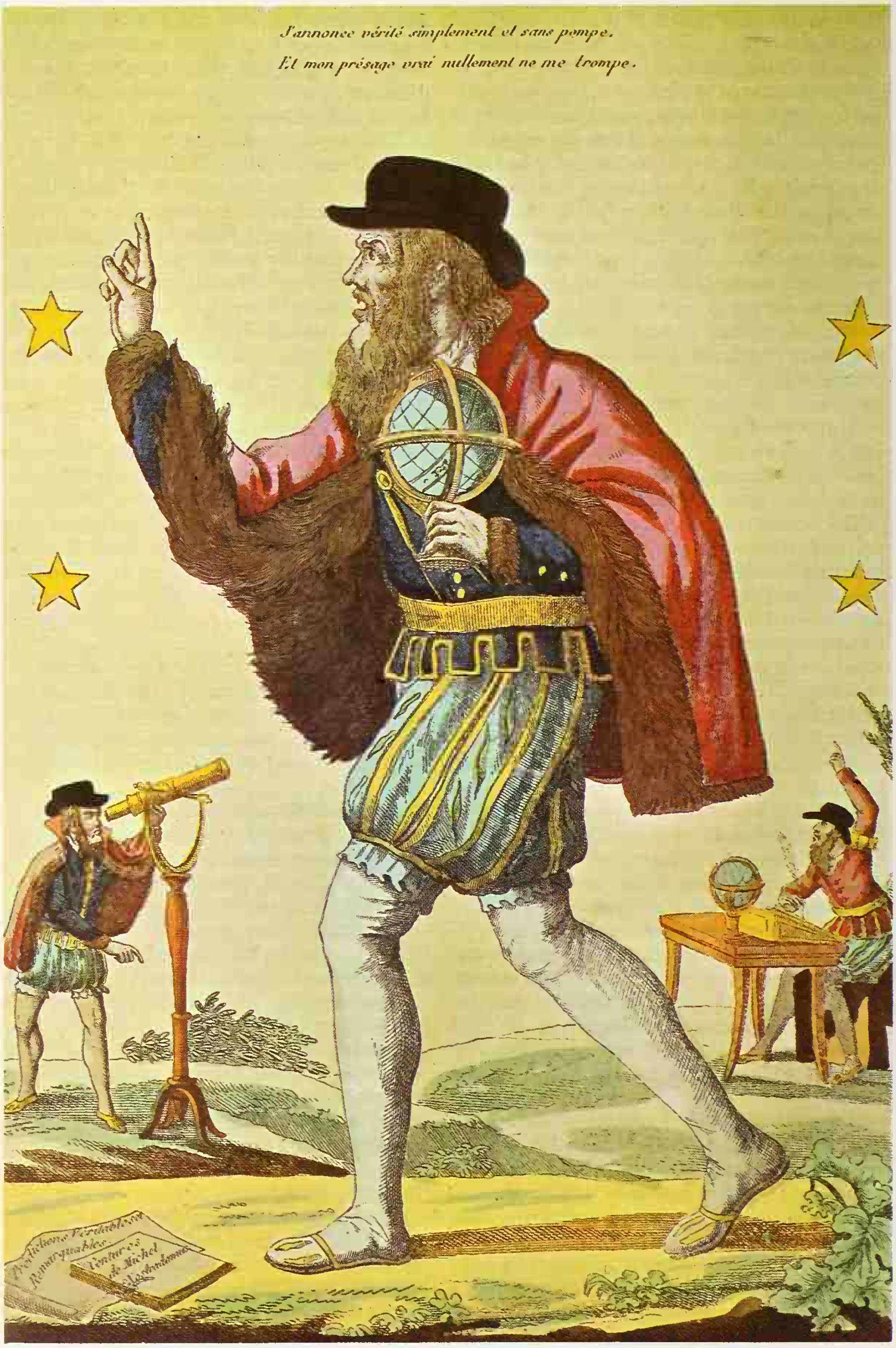
From this time on he devoted himself to writing: at first, pharmacological treatises on the preparation of skin creams, hair dyes and other cosmetics, and a handbook on jams, jellies and conserves. Soon, however, he turned his attention to the occult arts that his grandfather had practised, and began to publish a series of almanacs with predictions for the coming year. These contained only the occasional verse, but in June 1555 he published, in Lyon, the first part of the work that was to establish a reputation that has survived to the present day.

This was *Les Prophéties de Me. Michel Nostradamus*, in 353 verse quatrains. It aroused great interest, and the following year Nostradamus was summoned to the French court by the queen, Catherine de Médicis, who was deeply interested in the occult. He remained in Paris for about a month, during which time he cast horoscopes for the royal children and for many others; but, learning that the Paris magistrates were anxious to question him about his sources of information, he returned to Salon. There he continued the writing of his verse prophecies; he was also consulted by the church authorities in nearby Orange, some of whose church silver had been stolen, and wrote an astrological judgement on the matter. It still survives in a copy, but apparently the silver was not recovered.

His quatrains were divided into sets or 'Centuries' of 100 verses, and in 1557 a further 387, numbers IV-54 to VII-40, were inserted in a new edition of the *Prophéties*. In the following year, the final three Centuries, making 940 quatrains in all, were published as a separate volume. The missing 60 quatrains were published in 1568, two years after his death.

Every Nostradamus quatrain represents an individual prophecy. They are not presented in any obvious chronological order and each must be interpreted individually. In archaic French, full of misprints, oddly punctuated and filled with obscure and anagrammatic references, they are very difficult to interpret. The Nostradamus enthusiast can try to identify prophecies that have already been fulfilled, or he can attempt to formulate a clear, as opposed to a veiled, prophetic statement on the basis of any given quatrain. Every successive generation discovers something that appears to be significant, and surprising coincidences have been recorded.

One of the most dramatic occurred soon after the 1558 publication. In a dedication


J'annonce vérité simplement et sans pompe.
Et mon présage vrai nullement ne me trompe.
Prédictions Véritables
Remarquables
de Michel

Nostradamus enthusiasts believe that each of his four-line verses contains an individual prophecy, and he is credited with foretelling the outbreak of the Second World War: imaginary portrait of Nostradamus

Bibliothèque Nationale/Snark International to the French king, Henry II, Nostradamus had written (VI-70):

Head of the world shall be the great Chyren –
Plus ultra after – loved, feared, respected:
His fame and renown shall rise above
the heavens,
And with sole title victor well content.

'Chyren' is an anagram for 'Henry C', and *Ne plus ultra* was the personal motto of the Emperor Charles V.

Unfortunately for Henry, he took part the following year (against the advice of a horoscope drawn up for him by Luca Gaurico) in a joust at the wedding of his sister. The lance of Montgomery, the captain of the Scottish Guard, broke on the king's golden helmet, and a piece penetrated Henry's eye and brain. He died ten days later.

Very soon, another Nostradamus quatrain (I-35) was being quoted:

The young lion shall overcome the old,
On field of war in single combat,
In a cage of gold his eyes shall be pierced,
Two knells for one, then die a cruel death.

This apparently accurate prediction assured Nostradamus's reputation. Not much is known about his later life, although the Queen is reputed to have kept in touch with him. In 1565 the new young king, Charles IX, stopped in Salon and insisted on meeting Nostradamus; Catherine, who was with the king, requested more prophecies, and the king presented him with a pension and the title *médecin et conseiller ordinaire du roi*.

Nostradamus did not live long to enjoy his pension, dying of dropsy on 1 July 1566. He was said to have been buried upright so that the citizens of Salon could not defile his grave with their feet, but this has been disproved by excavation.

Since that time countless editions of the prophecies have been published, and each generation has found quatrains which appear to predict current events.

A fascinating interpretation, published in 1921 by C. Loog, a Berlin postal official, appears to have predicted the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. This example illustrates a completely typical interpretative phenomenon. Loog was obviously familiar with two well-known Nostradamus manuals: Le Pelletier's *Les Oracles de Michel de Nostradamus* (Paris 1867) and the Abbé Charles Nicoullaud's *Nostradamus, ses Prophéties* (Paris, 1914). The quatrain in question is number III-57. Translated into English, it reads:

Seven times you shall see the English change,
Dyed in blood, in two hundred ninety year,
Not France, by the German support,
Aries doubteth his Bastarnan pole.

To 'interpret' most of the quatrains it is necessary to identify the period or, even better, the year to which they might conceivably refer. Nicoullaud proposed that the first two lines implied that during a period of 290 years Britain would experience seven changes of dynasty. But 290 years from when? Nicoullaud thought of 1603, when James I came to the throne, making the year in question 1893. But nothing of any importance happened in that year. So he began again with 1649, the year when Charles I was executed. This gave him 1939, the date of the start of World War II, as the year that would be 'dyed [or tinged] in blood'; and the expression was certainly an appropriate one.

Loog, following Nicoullaud's example, based his calculations on the year 1649 and interpreted the quatrain as follows: 'In 1939 there will be the last noteworthy change of dynasty in Britain. "Aries (zodiacal sign) will clearly have doubts about his protectorate Bastarnien." In the era of Tacitus the German tribe of the Bastarnae was on the other side of the River Vistula, hence in "Poland". Aries, the first sign of the zodiac, rules the East. Nostradamus therefore clearly indicates that in 1939 there will be a critical state of affairs in the revived State of Poland hand in hand with Britain's last and greatest crisis.'

Nicoullaud did not equate Bastarnan with Poland but with something totally different. Indeed, it was Le Pelletier who provided the Polish indication, but in a completely different context. Loog took his interpretative elements from both Le Pelletier and Nicoullaud and arrived at speculative, although eventually strangely accurate, conclusions that owed something to each of these two writers.

Loog's interpretation was published in 1921. In the autumn of 1939, 18 years later, a number of people more or less simultaneously told Josef Goebbels, the Nazi Propaganda Minister, about it. This led to the German interest in faked Nostradamus prophecies for psychological warfare during the Second World War. It also led to the employment in Berlin of Karl Ernst Krafft (1900-45), a Swiss astrologer who was a great Nostradamus enthusiast and who had studied his works for years on end. Krafft himself never consciously tampered with the quatrains, and all the 'dirty work' was done by the Propaganda Ministry.

There are a number of well-known prophecies that appear to refer to Napoleon. For instance, there is quatrain number I-60:

An emperor shall be born near Italy,
Who shall cost dear to the Empire,
They shall say, with what people he keepeth
company!
He shall be found less a prince than a butcher.

Another quatrain begins. 'From (being) a simple soldier he will come to (achieve or rule) an Empire'. Before 1933 most contemporary Nostradamus pundits supposed that the 'simple soldier' must mean Napoleon but there were soon some who thought it could equally well be Hitler, who was a mere corporal in 1918 and less than 20 years later was the virtual 'ruler' of Germany.

During the spring of 1940 Krafft delivered a short course of lectures on Nostradamus in Berlin. His rendering of the following quatrain, II-100, shows how a prevailing mood or hopes can colour an interpretation:

In the islands shall be so horrid tumults,
That nothing shall be heard but a warlike
surprise,
So great shall be the insult of the robbers,
That every one shall shelter himself under
the great league.

For Krafft 'the islands' meant the British Isles and 'robbers' were the dastardly British who rob and pillage. The 'tumult' in Britain would be horrible, worse than anyone could imagine. The reference to war was construed to mean total war, involving the whole population. The last two lines were supposed to explain that the injuries that the British robbers inflicted upon other nations would be so great that Europe would range herself against Britain to put an end to her predatory acts.

On the other side, there were plenty of people prepared to find prophecies by Nostradamus of the present and future state of Nazi Germany. The difficulties involved in interpretation of the verses are exemplified in the first (II-24) of several in which the name 'Hister' occurs:

Bestes farouches de faim fluves tranner;
Plus part du camp encontre Hister sera,
En caige de fer le grand fera treisner,
Quand Rin enfant Germain observera.

This is most readily translated:

Beasts wild with hunger drag the streams;
Most of the army shall be along the Hister,
In cage of iron the great one shall be drawn,
When Rhine keeps watch over his young
brother.

At the time Nostradamus wrote, the Turks had invaded Hungary and reached the Danube (Latin, *Ister*); 'Rhine' was the emperor Charles V, and his brother was Ferdinand, king of Hungary. In the 1940s, however, it was maintained that 'Hister' was Hitler: substitute *champ* ('field') for *camp*, and *rien* ('nothing') for *Rin*, and the second and fourth lines could be read:

Hitler will control an ever-growing territory...
When the child of Germany observes no law.

More recently, quatrains have been identified as predicting the atom bomb, the purges of Stalin in Russia, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and much more.

However, a detailed study of the verses of Nostradamus soon reveals that he wrote mostly about the France that he knew, occasionally about England and Scotland (Mary Stuart, queen of Scotland, was at that time at the French court), the Mediterranean countries and central Europe. Kingdoms and powers were identified by easily recognizable symbols, such as the cock for France.

Generation after generation of Nostradamus enthusiasts have supposed that the quatrains, no matter how obscure their contents, must be regarded as genuinely prophetic. It is conceivable, however, that he composed them with tongue (at least in part) in cheek, and that he was well aware that there is an enduring market for prophecies – particularly for veiled ones.

George Rodger/Magnum

Nuer warrior in ceremonial costume: the Nuer believe in an omnipotent God who is responsible for good fortune and for bad, who is in the sky but is also on earth with man. Man is God's opposite, the created as against the creator, but his 'breath' or 'life' comes from God and returns to God again after death

NUER

IT IS NOT EASY to make a clear and rigid distinction between magic and religion, but most peoples make their own. In the case of the Nuer, except for what may be called fetishes (a recent introduction into their country) and a few charms, they have little of what they call *wal*, a word we might translate as 'medicine' or 'magic'. On the other hand, *kwoth*, or 'spirit', which most people would regard as a religious concept, has a very large part in their thought.

The Nuer are a Nilotic people of some 200,000 souls who live in the swampy and savannah country on both sides of the Nile, in the region where that river is fed by its two tributaries, the Sobat from the east and the Bahr al-Ghazal from the west. Cattle are their predominant interest, not only for their economic value but also because they are symbols of prestige, the wherewithal for marriage and payment of debts, and the link between man and the spiritual world.

There can scarcely be said to be any political authority or office in any of the tribes which form the Nuer people. What provides a loose framework of cohesion, and is also the idiom in which political loyalties and enmities are expressed, is the system of clans and their lineages: each tribe has a clan which is regarded as owner of the territory of the tribe. Those Nuer who live in the territory but are not members of that clan, and persons of foreign, mainly Dinka, origin who also live there, identify themselves politically with it, though retaining their distinctness as descent groups. The adult male population of each tribe falls into stratified sets, each consisting of all those who were initiated into manhood, by undergoing a very painful operation, within a period of four years.

Upper and Lower Spirits

The people who live in the same neighbourhood are closely linked, and a man can always claim relationship of one sort or another with the people he meets. The link may be one of common descent or it may be one of affinity, the Nuer having several forms of marital union. Though monogamy is usual, polygamous unions are frequent.

The Nuer are a very religious people, although this has not always been appreciated, as they lack dogma, organized cult, liturgy, sacraments, or elaborate mythology. Their religion may be said to be highly spiritual, its central notion being that of *kwoth*, a word which has the meaning of violent breathing out of air, and which can be translated in its religious sense as spirit. It is near enough to our conception of God.

God is thought to be in the sky but he is also thought to be everywhere and is said to be like the wind and like the air – he has no prophets or sanctuaries or earthly forms. So he is both far from man, as sky is from earth, but is also here on earth with man – a common paradox in religion. He created the world and everything in it out of nothing, by thinking or imagining it, as one creates a poem. He is regarded and spoken to as a person and as a father, in a spiritual sense, and as such he is friend to man. At the same time he punishes faults, whether these are deliberate or inadvertent.

Nuer are logical in this matter. God being, to their way of thinking, omnipotent, they attribute to him not only fortune but misfortune too. They also recognize that one cannot rationally understand God's nature, and in speaking about him they use what we could call metaphorical and allegorical expressions. They say they are simple, and that what small black ants are to man so is man to God. Therefore whatever happens, whether good or ill, must be accepted. If it is ill, prayer and sacrifice may bring relief, and if they do not, one must be resigned. It is the will of God and he is the owner and disposer of all things. What they ask for in their prayers and invocations are peace of mind and deliverance from troubles.

There are other spiritual beings. Nuer call them 'spirits of the above' and 'spirits of the below', and they are also called *kuth*, the plural of kwoth, 'spirits'. Those of the 'above' are of two kinds: spirits of the air or of breezes, and the souls of those killed by lightning. Nuer say that God has taken the latter for himself and that they are in celestial union with him. They become patron spirits of their families and of their descendants so long as they are remembered.

The spirits of the air are associated with various natural phenomena and social activities; they cause sickness and may possess people, who then become their prophets. Cattle are dedicated and sacrificed to these spirits and hymns are sung to them, hymns full of poetic imagery. The evidence seems clearly to show that though these spirits are conceived of as separate beings they are also regarded as derived from, as manifestations of, God, under various names; that if they are many they are also, all being spirit, one, different yet the same, divided yet whole; hence they have been described as 'refractions of God'. Shrines, cattle and drums are dedicated to them, and they may become attached not only to persons but also to families, lineages, and tribal segments.

None of the spirits of the 'below' is held in high esteem, but the most important are what are generally called totemic ones. The members of a descent group or lineage respect one or other natural species; lions, lizards or snakes, for instance. They will not harm these creatures and they will not eat them. However, it is clear from what Nuer say that what they have in mind is not so much the creature, as the spirit which is manifested in it. The creature is regarded as a sort of emblem or representation of spirit. Spirit is even more immanent in various other earthly manifestations, what might be called effulgent Nature sprites and fetishes, to which, as with the totemic spirits, prayer and sacrifice may be offered.

So whereas God is conceived of as transcendental, lower down the scale spirit is more and more embedded in the psychical and material; but in all its forms, though separate, it is still one. Its distribution in diverse forms is to be attributed to the relation of the spirit to a variety of social groups and activities. In relation to all men, and what affects all men, spirit is thought of as

All the members of a Nuer tribe acknowledge their obligation to support each other in war: Nuer chieftain addressing his warriors

George Rodger/Magnum

one, as God, whereas, in relation to any particular social group or any person or event, it is thought of in one of the other forms.

The Great Camp of the Dead

Religion is a reciprocal relationship between God and man. What is the Nuer conception of man? They are pre-eminently dualists in their religious thought. God and man, creator and created, are opposites symbolized by sky and earth. Their ideas about the nature of man are perhaps best understood by what they say happens at death. Then what is buried is the *ring*, the 'flesh'. The *yiegh*, 'breath' or 'life', returns to God from whence it came. The *tie*, 'soul' or 'intellect', becomes a ghost, and it is this which in lifetime can curse, and in its ghostly form haunt, should the man have been wronged. It is symbolized for Nuer by the shadow.

Nuer do not pretend to know where what they call 'the great camp' of the dead is, nor what they do there, and they are more interested in the survival of their name among the living. That is why a wife must be married to the name of a dead man if he has no sons, that she may bear sons to his name. Unless ghosts are troublesome Nuer pay little attention to them. Sacrifices may be made for them, but scarcely to them. Their graves are not remembered. Their monuments are in their descendants.

Spirit in one or other of its manifestations may enter into the affairs of men and, in the case of the minor spirits, their interference may seem capricious. In the case of spirit conceived of as God, the sickness or other trouble that its entry is thought to cause is generally believed to be due to the breach of some prohibition, or what we may call sin. We can understand that they think incest or adultery should be punished; but it is also a serious fault for a man to milk a cow or eat out of the same vessel from which another man has eaten, with whose kin the first man's kin have a blood feud. Such faults (*dueri*) are often unwitting ones.

We might say that the fault, manifested in the sickness it brings about, lies less in the act itself than in the breach of the prohibition. What makes it more serious in Nuer eyes is that the pollution may spread (*dop*) and injure others besides the man responsible. Sometimes a danger may threaten when there is no question of fault, as when God manifests himself in the birth of twins. Whatever the reason, what has happened can be wiped out (*wol*) by sacrifice.

Sacrificial Drama

Sacrifice is the most typical and expressive act of Nuer religion. The officiant may be a priest (a traditional and hereditary office), a prophet (a personal endowment), a representative of a social group, or any senior man, depending upon the situation. There are two kinds of sacrifice. The collective ones are made on occasions of changes in social status, as at initiation, marriage and death, their function being to confirm such changes by calling on God to witness them. The expiatory kind of sacrifice is made on behalf of persons in situations of sickness or danger. In the first kind Nuer wish to bring in spirit, in the second to get rid of it.

Ideally what is sacrificed is an ox, but sheep, goats, and even wild cucumbers may be used in their place. In all sacrifices the drama is enacted in four acts: the victim is presented to spirit, it is consecrated, it is invoked, it is immolated. In the consecration, by placing his hand on its back, it may be supposed that man is identifying himself with the victim, the ox being a substitute for the man. In the invocation the intention of the sacrifice is stated as the officiant walks up and down past the tethered ox, gesticulating with his spear as he makes his speech.

The meaning sacrifice has for the Nuer is complex, as the different words they use to refer to it indicate. Sometimes the sense of gift is uppermost; often there is a touch of the idea of bargain, or it may have more the meaning of redemption, or of absolution. Whichever sense is meant in any particular sacrifice, it must be emphasized that Nuer are conscious of the fact that God gets nothing except the life of the victim (man gets the meat), and that the life, like everything, is his already.

It is not the case, as is often supposed, that the religious thought of primitive peoples – and the Nuer are certainly primitive in the usual sense of the word – is crude and irrational and hardly worth recording. From this article it will be seen that it is complex, intelligent and sensitive. E.E.EVANS PRITCHARD

NUMEROLOGY

MODERN NUMEROLOGY is a popular type of fortune-telling. Lying behind it is a history of many centuries of speculation about numbers and their symbolism, and it is based on two extremely old principles. The first, which goes directly back to Pythagoras and his followers in Ancient Greece, is that numbers are clues to the real, underlying structure of the universe. The second is the deep-rooted belief that the name of a thing contains the essence of its being (see NAMES), so that the name of a person, properly analysed and understood, will reveal the truth about that person's character and course through life. Linked with these principles is the tradition that the secrets of the universe are enshrined in the Hebrew alphabet (see ALPHABET).

Numerologists believe that the letters of your name contain the essential truth about you. You start by turning each letter of your name into a number (using the name by which you normally think of yourself), as follows:

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
A	B	C	D	E	U	O	F
I	K	G	M	H	V	Z	P
Q	R	L	T	N	W		
J		S			X		
Y							

These letter-number equivalents come from the Hebrew alphabet, in which the letters also stood for numbers – aleph (A) for 1, beth (B) for 2, gimel (G) for 3, and so on. Noughts are disregarded, so that S (shin – 300) is 3, while K (kaph – 20) is 2. There is no nine in the system because the Hebrew letters which stood for 9, 90 and 900 have no equivalents in our alphabet. Numbers for letters like E and X which do not exist in Hebrew are taken from the Greek alphabet, where the letters again stood for numbers.

You write down your name with the number equivalents and add up the numbers. If the total has two or more figures, add these together and go on in this way until you reach a single figure. For example:

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
6133114 35125385125

Total 59: 5 + 9 = 14; 1+4 = 5

The number 5 is the number of the name William Shakespeare. Over the centuries a considerable body of symbolism has attached itself to the number 5 and Shakespeare's character and achievements can be interpreted in terms of it.

Any name can be turned into one of the numbers from 1 to 9, which means that the numerologist has a manageable quantity of categories, or broad personality-types, to work with. But he does not maintain, of course, that if your name adds to 5 you must have exactly the same character and talents as Shakespeare and the innumerable other human beings, past and present, whose names yield the figure 5.

The number of your full name indicates your general personality-type. Within it, you can find out more about yourself by considering the total of the vowels in your name (the Heart Number, which reveals your inner self, the person you are at heart) and the total of the consonants (the Personality Number, which reveals your outer self and how others see you).

Open and Hidden

This distinction follows from the fact that written Hebrew, like other early alphabets, had no vowels. So the consonants, which were written down, show your outer shell, while the vowels, which were concealed, show your hidden, inner personality. (Y is treated as a vowel only if there is no other vowel in the word: in Lynn it counts as a vowel, in Henry as a consonant.)

The same fact probably accounts for the old idea that vowels are particularly sacred and magical, more mysterious and important than the consonants which everyone could see written down; the 'soul' hidden in the 'body' of the consonants. Gnostic mystical theorists in the eastern Mediterranean area in the early centuries after Christ were sometimes peculiarly addicted to vowels. One of their versions of the name of God was, in English letters, Iaoouee.

You can also consider the numbers given by each letter of your name. The letters of William Shakespeare, for example, do not include a 7 at all (suggesting the absence of the introspective and introvert qualities associated with the number), but contain the number 1 five times over (suggesting masterful creativity and originality, driving force and egotism).

Again, you can consider nicknames and other variants of your full name, which are supposed to reveal you as you are in your relationships with those who use them. A married woman's maiden name should indicate her character before she married, and her married name should show how marriage has changed her.

Yet another important number is the Birth Number, found by adding up your day, month and year of birth (for instance, if you were born on 15 August 1972, 15+8+1+9+7+2 = 42, and 4+2 = 6). This number is believed to reveal the mould in which the workings of fate cast you at your birth, what you were destined to be. If your Birth Number does not harmonize with the number of your name, then you are probably prone to fierce inner conflicts.

The Number of God

If your number is 1, you are thought to be an exceptionally powerful, positive and dominating person, forceful, aggressive and ambitious. You lead, pioneer, originate and invent. Self-reliant, obstinate and authoritative, you tolerate no rivals and you have few close friends. You can be kind and generous to people who do what you want, but you have a violent temper and no scruples if opposed. You are unlikely to find deep happiness in love and friendship, as you tend to look on other people as potential supporters or opponents rather than partners.

People whose number is 1 are daring and self-reliant. They stand on their own feet, resent anyone else's authority, rarely seek advice or follow it. They are strong leaders, good at getting things going, and should flourish as organizers, inventors, designers, planners, engineers and technicians. They are single-minded, hasty-tempered, wilful and impatient, and tend to take pride in being difficult to deal with.

Most of this follows from the fact that in Christian number symbolism 1 is the number of God the Father. The creativity, originality and bent for organization of 1 are derived from the God who created the world and many of the other characteristics, including dominance, initiative, leadership, loneliness, impatience of opposition and generosity to supporters, are drawn from the God of the Old Testament.

This is reinforced by 1's position as the first of the numbers, so that a year which adds to 1 is said by numerologists to be a time of fresh beginnings and discoveries, new ventures, an outburst of creative activity. The fact that the figure 1 resembles an erect phallus has not escaped the notice of numerologists and contributes to their view of the number's creativity, but also of its solitariness and independence.

That all things are essentially one thing, that unifying all the phenomena of existence there is a One which is also the Whole, is a belief found in many religious and mystical traditions. The number 1 has been revered by number mystics from the Pythagoreans onwards as the First Cause, the Infinite God, the One which transcends all multiplicity. Whether 1 could properly be called a number at all was long in doubt, and until comparatively modern times it was generally thought of, not as a number but as the essence or underlying principle of number, all other numbers being made of it (2=1+1, 3=1+1+1, and so on). It was said to be neither odd nor even, but both, because if added to an odd number it makes it even and vice versa. So it combined the opposites of odd and even, and all the other opposites in the universe.

Two and the Devil

The human longing for unity and singleness, the tendency to regard oneness as good, multiplicity and diversity as evil, is deep and widespread. Many mystics have longed to become 'one' with God. In Judaism and Islam, God is One. In Christianity, God is Three, but also One. One is good, many bad, which is why 2, the first number to break away from 1, is traditionally the number of evil and in Christian numerology belongs to the Devil. It is also the number of woman, long regarded in male-dominated societies as fundamentally evil.

From the Pythagoreans onwards, 2 has carried a connotation of evil, but modern numerology is reluctant to classify any number as inherently vicious and in its picture of 2's characteristics this ancient link is largely submerged. But the link with woman has survived and 2 is still regarded as the number of femininity and as the opposite of 1. Two is passive where 1 is active, negative where 1 is positive, weak where 1 is strong, receptive where the phallic 1 is thrusting.

People with a name which adds to 2 are described as quiet, unassuming and gentle. Tactful and diplomatic, they are followers rather than leaders and they get their way by persuasion and co-operation instead of by the forceful, direct methods of 1. Unambitious, disliking the limelight, they are content to stay in the background and since they are obedient, neat, modest, helpful and discreet, they make good subordinates.

They are good-natured, sympathetic and understanding, they get on well with people, but they may be rather shy and timid. They like detail and routine, and are worried by new departures, bold initiatives, sudden changes of plan. They tend to undervalue themselves and are always in danger of being trampled on by other people. They are likely to be fundamentally uncertain of themselves. Deep in their personality there may be a strain of malice, cruelty and deceit, and at their worst they can be liars and mischief-makers, spineless and sulky, cowardly and pessimistic.

All this is an old-fashioned stereotype of woman, not as the wife and mother and partner of man, which is more the preserve of 6, but as man's opposite and subordinate. The characteristics apply equally to a year which adds to 2, which numerologists expect to be a time of peace and quiet, of gentle progress by way of harmonious co-operation with others, of negotiation and reconciliation. As one numerologist puts it, the seed sown in a 1-year grows quietly in the 2-year.

Christian numerologists found confirmatory evidence of 2's evil nature in the Bible, where Genesis does not say that 'God saw that it was good' after the second day of creation, though it says it about all the other days. And in the 12th century Hugh of St Victor said that, as the first number to break away from the unity of 1, 2 is the number of sin, which deviates from original good. As the evil number which sets up an opposite to God, 2 naturally belongs to the Devil, God's arch-opponent. The reversed pentagram with two points upwards is a symbol of evil and Satan (see PENTAGRAM). The cloven hoof is a mark of the Devil and so is the forked tongue of the serpent.

This link with the Devil accounts for the streak of malice and cruelty which numerologists attribute to 2 and the characteristics of telling lies and making mischief come from the Prince of Darkness. The sense of 2 as evil and deceitful survives in several common expressions. To double-cross someone is to cheat or betray him, to be two-faced is to be insincere, and double-dealing is trickery.

Third Time Lucky

Three is traditionally the luckiest of numbers and belongs to lively, sparkling, charming people who easily make money and conquests in love, who are talkative and like to show off. Witty and talented, they adore the limelight and detest obscurity, though they are often more nervous and sensitive than their assured exterior suggests. They tend to expend their energies wastefully in too many directions and, since they love luxury and pleasure, to scatter money about. Though always the life and soul of the party, they can sometimes be exasperatingly vain, gossipy and superficial. Seldom worried or depressed, they are people to whom everything seems to come easily, who succeed without really trying.

Behind this picture of 3 several strands of symbolism converge. The number 1, though potentially all-creative, is regarded as barren by itself, for however many times it is multiplied by itself it remains 1. The number 2 introduces a pair of opposites, but 2 multiplied by 1 remains 2. It is 3 which fruitfully reconciles the opposites, to create more numbers (3 x 2 = 6). So 1 is the number of God alone and unmanifested. In 2 something emanates from God's wholeness to create a pair of opposites. In 3 the opposites are reconciled and God becomes manifest and comprehensible to human experience. Chiming with this is the sexual symbolism of 3 as the number of the male genitals, which are threefold.

This is the basic numerological interpretation of the Trinity, the threefold godhead. As the number of the Trinity, in Christian numerology 3 is naturally linked with the most holy, the most perfect, the best. But the number's connection with the superlative is older, and the notion of the superlative itself involves the third term in a series of 3 – good, better, best. And 3 is not only linked with 'best' but with 'all' as a number of completeness. Time is made of 3 ingredients (past, present and future) and so is space (length, breadth and thickness). All created things have a beginning, a middle and an end.

The feeling that 3 is the basis of everything we experience may account for the belief that runs of luck tend to go in threes. 'Third time lucky' is a common phrase, and if two unlucky things happen one after the other, some people will deliberately break a dish or cause some other minor damage to end the run of ill luck. Three of anything is somehow 'all' or 'enough' of it, as in 'I'll give you three guesses'. The hero of a folktale often has 3 wishes or 3 tries at a task and the heroine has 3 suitors, while 3 often bobs up as a number of completeness in nursery rhymes: Goldilocks and the 3 bears, 3 little kittens who lost their mittens, 3 blind mice.

The medieval Christian numerologists remarked on various uses of 3 as a number of completeness in the New Testament, including the 3 gifts of the Magi, the 3 temptations in the wilderness, 3 denials of Christ by Peter, 3 falls on the way to Golgotha, 3 days between the crucifixion and the resurrection, 3 appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples. These could all be taken as foreshadowings or reflections of the Trinity. Groups of 3 can also be found in Greek mythology, such as the 3 Graces, the 3 Fates and the 3 Furies. They attracted the attention of Renaissance humanists, who connected them with the Trinity. Even the 3 heads of Cerberus, the dog of the underworld, became an emblem of the Christian doctrine.

Numerous examples of divine triads come from the Celts, to whom 3 was a sacred number. They sometimes portrayed their deities in groups of 3 or with 3 heads or 3 faces (see BRIGIT; CELTS), apparently as a way of emphasizing their power and perhaps with the same basic idea of a single god making himself known in terms of 3 which underlies the stock numerological approach.

Down to Earth

Four, by contrast, is the number of the earth and is thoroughly gloomy. It is the number of people who are solid but uninspired, hard-working but plodding, steady, cautious, conservative and conventional. They are calm and composed on the surface, but there may be violent eruptions of feeling underneath and also severe indigestion (earthquakes and eruptions). They are capable organizers and administrators, but 4 does not hold out high prospects of success and reward.

The Pythagoreans linked 1 with the point, which in theory has no dimensions; 2 with the line, connecting 2 points, which has length but not breadth; and 3 with the triangle, connecting 3 points and creating surface, having length and breadth but not height. To construct the simplest solid figure – a pyramid – a fourth point has to be added above the triangle, and the four points connected. This suggested that the basis of the construction of all solid objects is to be found in the number 4.

Ever since, 4 has been the number of solidity and matter. According to the old theory, everything is made of the 4 elements (fire, air, earth and water), and 4 is especially the number of Earth, a solid object bounded by the four cardinal points. People whose name adds to 4 are consequently described by numerologists as solid and stable, but sadly uninspired, like lifeless matter that lacks the divine spark, as respectable, stodgy, humdrum persons, who regard themselves as pillars of society. Four is traditionally the unluckiest of numbers because of its link with earthly existence, which medieval numerologists regarded as gloomy, laborious, sin-ridden and filled with pain.

The connection of 4 with agricultural labour, toil on the earth's surface, and so with the traditional stereotype of the rustic, gave the number its connotation of relentless hard work for minimal and uncertain rewards, and of conservatism, slowness and caution. Modern numerologists try to put a bright gloss on it, but 4 is fundamentally the number of poverty, disappointment and defeat.

Five and the Flesh

Five is quite different, a nervous and highly strung number, associated with sensuality, fickleness, risk and gambling. Fives are versatile and amusing people, clever and resourceful, good company, good at languages and with words, optimistic and fun-loving. They make both friends and money easily. Jumpy, tense and restless, they live on their nerves and they live for sensation and excitement. They enjoy adventure, travel, the new and untried. They are highly attractive to the opposite sex and probably have active love-lives. They hate to be tied down or in a rut. Impatient of rules, they are likely to be erratic, untidy, unpunctual and irritable.

The restless, many-sided qualities of 5 follow from the fact that it comes halfway in the series of numbers from 1 to 9, so that it 'faces both ways' and has the characteristics of outgoingness, inability to concentrate, unreliability. Liveliness, love of excitement and of sensual pleasure stem from the association of the number with the 5 senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell). This link, the principal clue to 5 in medieval Christian numerology, made it the number of the living flesh.

Five is made of the first male number (3) added to the first female number (2), and so it is the number of sex and marriage from the male point of view – an idea found in Hinduism as well as in the West. In 5 woman is added to man, in 6 she is multiplied by him, so 6 is the female marriage number. The association of 5 with man and the senses was strengthened by the fact that the human body has 5 extremities and, shown with arms and legs extended, can be fitted into a five-pointed star.

Besides being made of 2+3, 5 is also made of 1 (God) plus 4 (the earth, matter), and so it is the number of living things, the animate world of Nature, divine life infused into the inanimate. It is the number of man as microcosm, as a miniature image of the universe. It can stand for the 4 directions plus the centre, sometimes represented in the symbolic decoration of Gothic churches by a five-petalled flower set at the centre of a cross.

Six for Harmony

Six is 5's opposite number. Where 5 is jumpy, nervous and erotic, 6 is calm and straightforward and is the number of mother, rather than sexual, love. It is the only number in the first ten which is 'perfect', meaning equal to the sum of its divisors other than itself (6 = 1 + 2 + 3), and so it is considered a specially balanced and harmonious number. People with names adding to 6 are expected to be well-adjusted and peaceable, not racked by inner conflicts.

It was on the sixth day of creation that God created man and woman, which suits 6 as the feminine marriage number. It is essentially the number of the wife and mother, and those strongly influenced by it find their happiness primarily in love and marriage, home and family. Decent, tranquil, kindly, unselfish, perhaps a bit humdrum, sixes are warm and affectionate, domesticated and thoroughly respectable. They also have the defects traditionally associated with the housewife, of being fussily preoccupied with trivialities, limited in outlook, sometimes unreasonably obstinate, and a trifle dull. A year which adds to 6 is supposed to have the same characteristics, as a time of harmony and balance, and is naturally a good year for marriages.

Contributing to the balanced picture of 6 is the hexagram, the six-pointed star made of two interlaced triangles, standing for God and man, male and female, fire and water, spirit and matter (see HEXAGRAM). On the sixth day of creation God made man 'in his image', and where 5 is the number of man as microcosm, 6 is the number of the Universal Man, man as macrocosm (see MACROCOSM; MAN). In the Cabala it is the sixth sefirah, Tifereth, which is the central, balancing and harmonizing sphere on the Tree of Life.

The Mystic Seven

A glance at any concordance will reveal the frequency with which 7 appears in the Bible, from the 7 days of creation to the numerous groups of 7 in the Book of Revelation – stars, angels, trumpets, plagues, thunders, seals and vials of wrath among them. The Jews kept the seventh day, on which God rested from his work, as the sabbath, the day of rest and worship, which the Christians transferred to Sunday.

The key to 7 is this connection with the week and the moon. It is an old and widespread belief that the cycles of life and death on earth are connected with the waxing and waning of the moon in the sky (see MOON) and each of the four phases of the moon's cycle lasts roughly 7 days. This is the origin of the month of 4 weeks of 7 days each.

It follows that 7 is another number of completeness: 7 days make a whole week, the whole world was made in 7 days, 7 of anything makes a complete set. The planets known in antiquity, whose movements in the sky were believed to influence events on earth, were 7, and they correspond to the 7 days of the week, the 7 metals and the 7 colours of the rainbow or spectrum (see CORRESPONDENCES; DAYS). There are also 7 notes in the musical scale and 7 vowels in the Greek alphabet.

As a number of completeness intimately linked with the inner rhythms of the universe, 7 is powerful in magic and frequently used in spells and charms, often in association with 3. In folk belief a seventh child has magical and clairvoyant powers, and the seventh son of a seventh son even more so.

Besides being complete, 7 is also numerologically solitary. It is not made by multiplication of any other numbers in the first ten, nor does it, multiplied, produce any of them. As a result is is considered a loner, isolated and virgin. It follows that people whose number is 7 are said to be withdrawn and solitary, introspective, given to reflection, interested in spiritual matters. Which is reinforced by the theme of the sabbath, the seventh day, the day of withdrawal from the busy world and concentration on the things of God.

So 7 is the number of the mystic, the magician, the philosopher, the scholar, the recluse. It belongs to those introverted, quiet, thoughtful people who hold aloof from life's flurry and bustle. Secretive, proud, reserved, stoical, pessimistic, sensitive, they have no time for foolish, frivolous and worldly things. Sevens may have a warmer heart than appears on the surface and may be deeply emotional while almost incapable of showing it. They are a law unto themselves.

Eight in the World

Eight is 7's opposite, as the number of worldly involvement. It is associated with business executives, efficient administrators, people of great organizing ability and dominating character, busy with worldly concerns, clever and realistic, cold and ruthless when necessary but not always unkind at heart. They are people who get on in the world. They are strongly influenced by money and power, and likely to be too self-sufficient and preoccupied with the main chance to make satisfactory partners in love and marriage. At the same time, 8's path is not an easy one. It is the number of outstanding success, but also of dramatic failure in worldly matters, and 8-people lead lives of constant strain and effort.

Lying behind this is the fact that 4 is the number of earth and matter, and since 8 is 4 doubled, 8 comes to mean intense involvment in material things. In addition, the Cabala's eighth sphere corresponds to Mercury, the god of trade and commerce, and the figure 8 resembles Mercury's wand or caduceus. The shape of the number, the two circles suggesting dualism – success and failure – and the fact that 8 is twice 4, which is the unluckiest of numbers, account for the ominous overtones.

In a different line of symbolism 8 means 'a new beginning' and so 'new life'. In Jewish tradition a baby boy is named and so begins his life as a real person on the eighth day after birth. Baptism in Christianity is a new beginning and fonts in churches are frequently octagonal. As the number of new life, 8 also means immortality and life after death. The early Christians associated 8 with Sunday. They accepted that God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh, but they said that the Sunday on which Christ rose from the dead was God's eighth day, on which he renewed his work and gave humankind the possibility of everlasting life. As the number of life after death, 8 stood for eternity and infinity, and the mathematical symbol for infinity is an 8 lying on its side. The prospect of an eternity in heaven or hell has contributed to the modern numerologists' predictions of great success or dramatic failure with 8.

The Nine Bright Shiners

A human child is normally conceived, formed and born in nine months, which has much to do with the character of 9 in numerology. Nines are said to be people of great gifts, with a strong bent for service to humanity. They are often fighters for good causes, for the poor and unfortunate. Nine is the number of high mental and spiritual achievement, of inspired and inspiring people who have broad interests and wide sympathies. Generous and compassionate, they may be easily imposed upon and they are often criticised as wild, unorthodox, impractical and rebellious. Passionate, romantic and emotional, 9s love to be on stage and need love and admiration. High-minded and idealistic, they fall in and out of love with great frequency. They enjoy the good things of life and relish beauty in all its forms.

Nine as the number of the humanitarian follows from the human gestation period. It is the number of love of mankind because of the child made flesh and born into the world. Another influence is the fact that 9 is the last and highest of the sequence from 1 to 9 and so it has the 'highest' characteristics. It is also seen as marking the transition from one scale (1 to 9) to a higher scale (starting with 10) and so it is the number of initiation, which again parallels the birth of a baby after nine months.

Again, 9 is a number of completeness. A complete circle has 360 degrees and 3+6+0=9. Christ completed his life on earth and died at the ninth hour, and nine categories of people are called blessed in the Sermon on the Mount. It is also a circular and complete number because if it is multiplied by any other number it always reproduces itself (3 x 9 = 27 and 2 + 7 = 9, or 6 x 9 = 54 and 5 + 4 = 9, and so on).

Patterns in Time

One obvious and cogent objection to numerology is that your name is unlikely to be an index to your character because you acquired it by chance: you just happened to be born into a family named Shakespeare or whatever. But numerology, like other forms of divination, does not believe in chance. It sees the world as a design in which your name and the circumstances of your birth have their allotted place.

Time runs numerologically, of course. The year 1900 adds up to 1, suggesting a time of new discoveries and inventions, and new and aggressive power groupings. The upsurge of interest in mysticism and the supernatural in the 1960s was attributed by numerologists to the fact that it was a 7-decade. Within the centuries and decades each year brings a fresh number into play, and within each year so does each month and day.

In theory numerology can be used to make your path through life easier and more successful. If your number is 6, you should try to deal with important matters on a day that adds to 6. You should also ideally live in a house whose number adds to 6 and a street whose name adds to 6, or so the numerologists recommend. In considering a city, the vowels which indicate its inner character provide the crucial number. London's vowels add to 5 – resilience, versatility, sensuality. New York's add to 3 – brilliance, liveliness, glamour. Those of Chicago and Los Angeles add to 9 – high achievement (and Chicago was the skyscraper's birthplace). The vowels of Paris, famed for women and wickedness, suitably add to 2, number of both woman and the Devil.

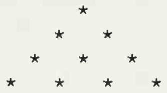
Music of the Spheres

Perhaps the most startling thing about numerology is its assumption that people and traits of character, periods of time, places, items of food, and everything that exists can be described in numerical terms or, to state it at its simplest and flattest, that everything is a number. The idea was bequeathed to Western numerology by the Pythagorean philosophers. Very little is known for certain about Pythagoras himself, but Aristotle, an opponent of the Pythagoreans, gave his version of their views in his *Metaphysics*. He said that they believed that all things are numbers, 'such and such a modification of numbers being justice, another being soul and reason, another being opportunity and similarly almost all other things being numerically expressible.' The notion is hard to grasp but, to borrow Christopher Butler's analogy, to understand how 'opportunity' could be thought of as a number, it is helpful to remember that although we behave as if a table is what it appears to be, we can also think of it as being 'really' something quite different, a conglomeration of atoms or molecules. One reason why numbers attracted philosophical speculation of this sort is that they provide a principle of order in a seemingly chaotic universe. Numbers obey rigid laws but they also extend to infinity and have infinite possibilities of combination with each other. These characteristics recommend them to people who are in search of a basic pattern to the universe which will combine orderliness with infinite variety.

It may have been Pythagoras himself who discovered that the musical intervals known in his time – the octave, the fifth and the fourth – can be expressed in terms of simple ratios between the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4. The discovery had a profound effect on Pythagorean thinking. Aristotle says that, 'since, again, they saw that the modifications and ratios of the numerical scales were expressible in numbers; since, then, all other things in their whole nature seemed to be modelled on numbers, and numbers seemed to be the first things in the whole of Nature, they supposed the elements of numbers to be the elements of all things, and the whole heaven to be a musical scale and a number.' This was the origin of the concept of the 'music of the spheres', the harmony of sound made by the heavenly bodies as they travel their rounds in the sky, the basis of the modern numerologist's 'vibrations', or cosmic rhythms which govern the universe (see VIBRATION). The 16th-century astronomer Kepler endeavoured to calculate the orbits of the planets in terms of the proportions of a vibrating string to the octave.

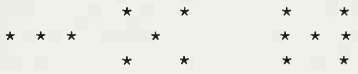
The Pythagoreans were also impressed by the fact that the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4, added together, make 10. In other words, they create the decad, the first ten numbers which from this point of view are the essential numbers, the others merely repeating them at higher levels. That the first ten numbers are the essential ones is a conclusion naturally drawn from the worldwide practice of counting on the fingers. The fact that ten is produced by 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 suggested that these four numbers were the origin and basis of all numbers, and therefore the basis of everything in the universe. This was confirmed by finding the basis of construction of all solid objects in the same four numbers: 1 is the point, 2 is the line, 3 is the triangle, and 4 is the tetrahedron or pyramid, the simplest solid.

The Pythagoreans venerated a figure called the *Tetractys*, which is a simple demonstration that 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10, and which looked like this:

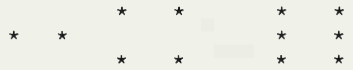


This early way of representing numbers, by pebbles or dots, suggested or supported the distinction between male and female, numbers which has influenced numerology ever since. Like other Greek philosophers, the Pythagoreans regarded the existence of pairs of opposites as an important characteristic of the universe's construction. Among these pairs were good and evil, male and female, and odd and even. Good and male were associated with odd numbers, evil and female with even numbers.

When numbers are represented by dots, it is immediately obvious why the odd numbers are male and the even numbers female. The numbers 3, 5 and 7, for example are shown as:



The even numbers 2, 4 and 6 are shown as:



The odd numbers each have what Plutarch called 'a generative middle part', while in each even number there is 'a certain receptive opening'.

Later philosophers followed the example of the Pythagoreans in seeing numbers as divine concepts, ideas in the mind of the god who fashioned the world. God was a great mathematician, who had created a universe of infinite variety and satisfying order to a numerical pattern. The same principle appears in the Cabala, where the Sefer Yetsirah describes the making of the world by means of numbers and letters.

In the Middle Ages numerology continued to flourish as a key to the nature of the universe and the mysteries of the Bible. One was the number of God the Father, 2 of his arch-enemy the Devil, 3 of the Trinity, 4 of matter and the earth, 5 of the senses and the flesh. But medieval numerologists were no more unvaryingly consistent than modern ones. On the contrary, a number could have several different meanings, and the one which best fitted a given set of circumstances would be applied to that particular context. (See also FORTY; GEMATRIA; PATHS; PYTHAGORAS; THIRTEEN; TWELVE)

RICHARD CAVENDISH

The persistence down the centuries of the innocent jingles of childhood may well be due to many nursery rhymes containing references to mythology, folklore and witchcraft

NURSERY RHYMES

AT THE BEGINNING of *The Golden Bough* Sir James Frazer tells of the priest-king of Diana of the Wood, 'who slew the slayer and shall himself be slain'; and the Bible story of Abraham and Isaac in which Abraham, about to offer his son as a sacrifice, is stopped from doing so by God, is well-known. It is a little more difficult to associate these examples of human sacrifice with the killing of the wren, the king of the birds, which used to take place in many villages on St Stephen's Day, in memory of the saint's martyrdom, and to recognize that this may be a substitute for the death of a human being. In Ireland the rhyme that accompanied this rite ran:

The Wren, the wren, the King of all birds,
Was caught St Stephen's day in the furze...

The wren was caught, killed, and his body hung on a pole, with great ceremony, and he was finally buried in the churchyard.

In the Scottish version, where the characters are Fozie Mozie, Johnie Rednosie, Fozlin Ben and others, the wren's body is cut up and shared out. This happens also in other versions, and Frazer suggests that this may symbolize eating the body and drinking the blood of the god. In Brittany, the bird is a thrush or blackbird, and it goes on singing after it is dead, a phoenix-like resurrection which occurs in much folklore and many religions including Christianity.

This resurrection of the blackbird in France leads us back again to England, to a very familiar nursery rhyme beginning:

Sing a song of sixpence, a pocketful of rye,
Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie,
And when the pie was opened the birds began to sing . . .

In parts of France it was Robin Redbreast who was sacrificially eaten.

The House that Jack Built is one of the best-known English nursery rhymes. In one version the last verse, which is a summary of the whole rhyme, starts with the knife that killed the cock; sacrificing a cock on a wedding day is a pagan religious custom. This cumulative nursery rhyme is very like an old Hebrew chant of 1590 or earlier:

A kid, a kid my father bought
For two pieces of money
A kid, a kid.
Then came the cat that ate the kid,
That my father bought for two pieces of money
A kid, a kid.

The rhyme has been explained as a parable of the persecution of the Israelites.

Lewis Spence, one of the leading figures in the modern Druid movement, thought that *Jack and Jill* enshrined a distant folk memory of some ancient ritual, on the grounds that no one goes looking for water on the top of a hill unless the water has special significance.

Death intrudes gruesomely into another charming and well-known rhyme, the one which begins, 'Lavender's blue, dilly, dilly, lavender's green, when I am king, dilly, dilly, you shall be queen.' Later it says:

If you should die, dilly, dilly, as it may hap,
You shall be buried, dilly, dilly, under the tap.
Who told you so, dilly, dilly, pray tell me why?
That you might drink, dilly, dilly, when you are dry.

There is a theory that this rhyme is connected with the old Twelfth Night rituals and relates to the choosing of the king and queen of the revels that brought the traditional Christmas festivities to a cheerful close. The detail about burying a body under the tap recalls the old Roman custom of interring a corpse beneath a wine jar, through which wine could be poured into the dead mouth.

Other rhymes, too, are related to folk customs. On Valentine's Day, in the West Country in England in the 19th century, small children bearing wreaths and lovers' knots used to go from house to house singing a curious verse:

Good morrow to you, Valentine!
Curl your locks as I do mine;
Two before and three behind;
Good morrow to you, Valentine!

A certain gleeful childish cruelty underlies the rhyme which tells the ladybird to fly away home. Children recited it when they threw the insect into the air to make it fly off. A common version in the North of England in the 19th century ran:

Lady-cow, lady-cow, fly thy way home,
Thy house is on fire, thy children all gone;
All but one that lies under a stone,
Fly thee home, lady-cow, ere it be gone!

Similar rhymes were known in Germany, Sweden and Denmark, where the ladybird was called Our Lady's hen.

All sorts of improbable theories have attempted to make sense of *Hey Diddle Diddle, the Cat and the Fiddle*, which is probably the English language's best-known nonsense verse. The cow jumping over the moon has been linked to the worship of Hathor, the cow-goddess of Ancient Egypt, and the little dog which laughed has been identified as Sirius, the dog star. The 'cat and the fiddle' have been traced to Queen Katharine of Aragon as Katerine la Fidèle (Katharine the Faithful) or alternatively to Catherine the Great.

Earnest, but not always very convincing, attempts have been made to link familiar nursery rhymes with real events and historical characters. In *Three Blind Mice*, for instance, the farmer's wife who cut off the tails of the three mice has been identified as Queen Mary Tudor ('Bloody' Mary) and the three maltreated rodents as Archbishop Cranmer and Bishops Latimer and Ridley, who were burned at the stake. Old King Cole, that merry old soul, has been identified as a British lord of Colchester in Roman times, who became the father-in-law of Constantine the Great. He appears in Geoffrey of Monmouth's largely ficititious history of Britain (see ARTHUR).

The old woman who lived in a shoe and had so many children she didn't know what to do has been identified with various ladies who had exceptionally large families, including George II's wife, Queen Caroline, with her eight children. Iona and Peter Opie commented that it is surprising that no one has suggested Edward Lear's mother, who had 21 children. The rhyme may be very old and the shoe may be related to the custom of throwing a shoe after the bride when she leaves for her honeymoon, so that her marriage may be fruitful. This would be consistent with the idea of a woman who had a great many children living inside a shoe.

A skipping rhyme, recorded in Dundee in 1949 in a school playground, which is the nursery of most working class children, is:

I am a poor, poor orphan, my mother she is dead;
My father he's a drunkard, and won't buy me no bread.
I see it at the window and hear the organ play;
It plays to bless my mother, for she is far away.
Ding, dong, fashion bells, farewell my mother...
My coffin shall be white, six little angels by my side,
Two to stay, and two to pray, and two to carry my soul away.

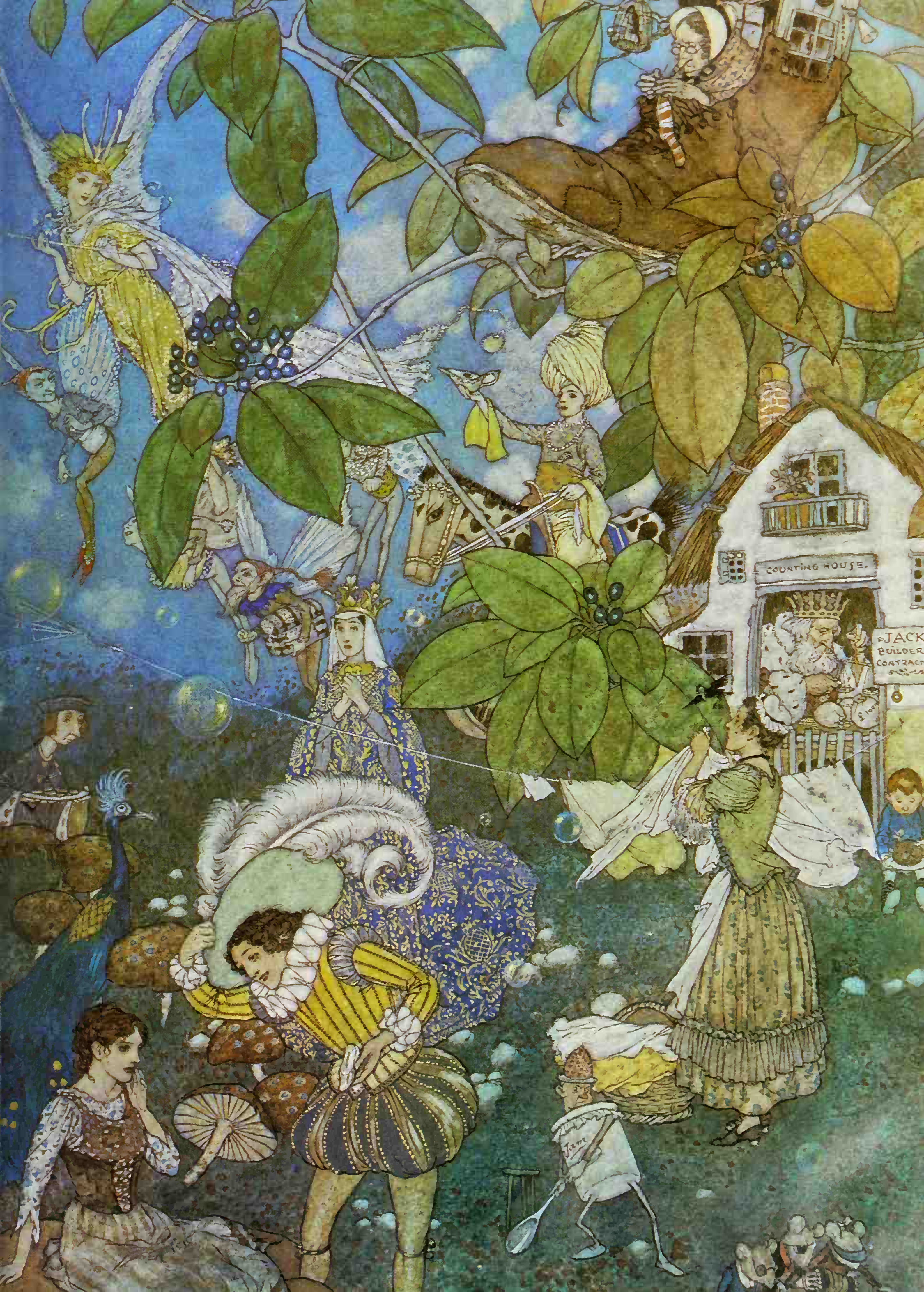
The last two lines of the verse are 'the White Paternoster', a form of words said as a charm, which was known in Babylon as an incantation: 'Shamash before me, behind me Sin, Nergel at my right, Nonib at my left', corresponding to the angels at the 'four corners of my bed' in the modern rhyme. In the 14th century, the carpenter in Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* quotes the White Paternoster in a rhyme intended to protect his house at all four compass points against fairies and other creatures.

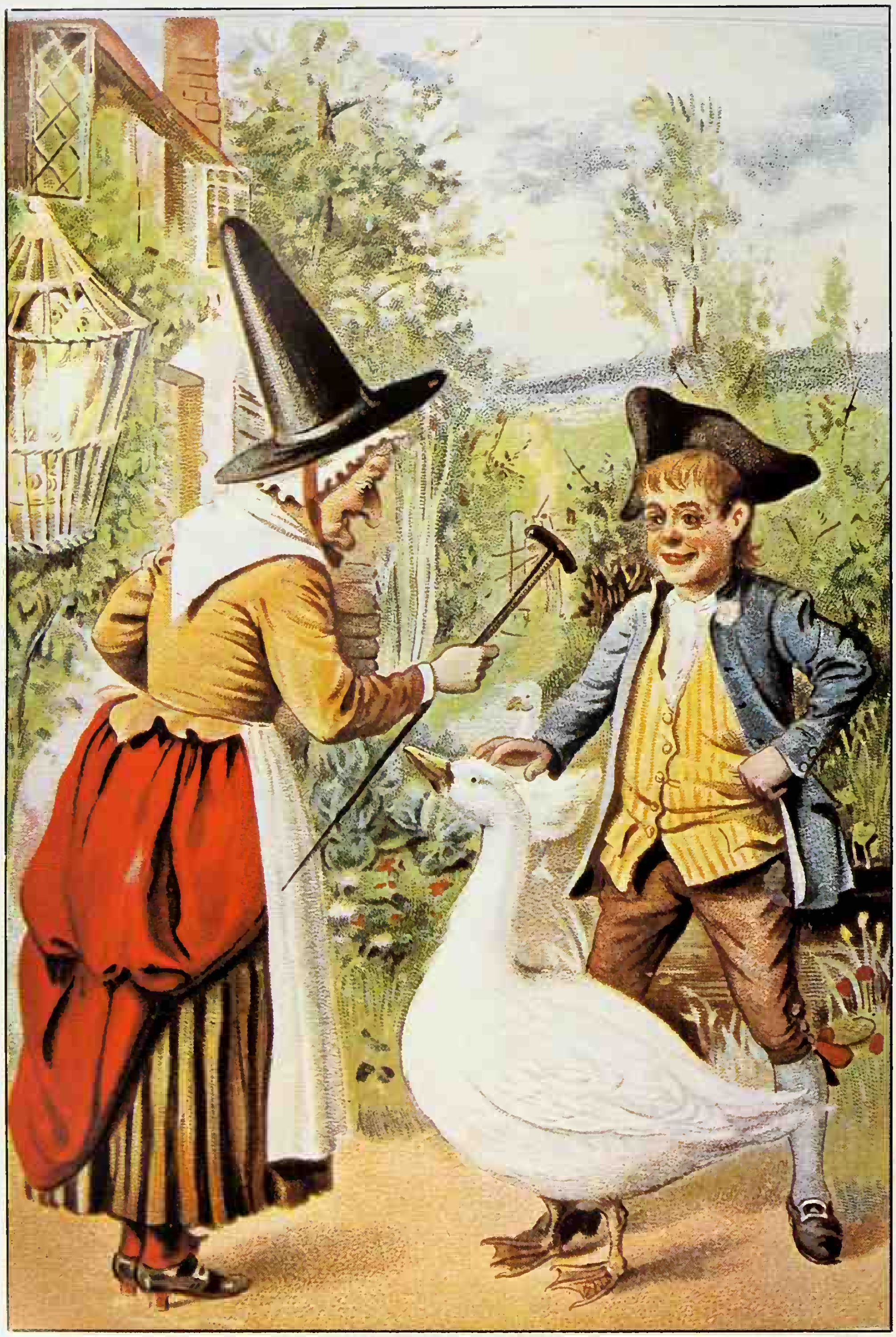
A rhyme from Dundee, printed as written down by a child, is:

My mither killed me,
My father ated me,
My sister pickit my banes,
And laid me atween twa marble stanes –
And noo I've grown intae a little white dove
To fly ower the fields o Airlie.

This rhyme from the folktale of *Pippety Pew* still lingers in folk memory. Goethe adapted a German version of the same rhyme, as a

The phoenix-like resurrection of birds who continue to sing after they are dead is a recurrent theme in much folklore: in England there are the four-and-twenty blackbirds in *Sing a Song of Sixpence*; the maid whose nose was pecked off by one of the resurrected birds while she was hanging out clothes in the garden is shown in this 19th-century illustration by Edmund Dulac of various nursery rhymes. The king in his counting house, the old woman who lived in a shoe, and the three blind mice are also depicted


COUNTING HOUSE.
JACK
BUILDER
CONTRAC
£100
Jam



Mother Goose: one of the earliest collections of nursery rhymes was published in the 18th century as *Mother Goose's Melody*

Victoria & Albert Museum/Chris Barker

song sung by Margarete in the prison scene in Faust. One interesting point is that, as in some of the ballads which describe a talking bird, the little white dove of the rhyme is the soul of a dead child.

In the year 1660, a man named Douglas and eight female companions were strangled and burned for, among other sins, having merry meetings with Satan, with music and dancing. The two favourite airs of his Majesty were:

Kilt thy coat, Maggie,
And come thy way with me.

and the tune of the following rhyme:

Hoolie, the bed'll fa!
Wha'll fa wi't?
Twa een, twa hands,
And twa bonnie feet.
Hoolie, the bed'll no fa!
Wha'll no fa wi't?
Wee Robin Redbreast
Sound asleep.

It is elsewhere recorded that the favourite tune played by Satan at the witches' meetings was the tune to the following rhyme:

The silly bit chicken, gar cast her a pickle,
And she'll grow mickle, and she'll grow mickle.
And she'll grow mickle, and she'll dae good,
And lay an egg to my little brood.

Without any alteration these are typical nursery rhymes.

The Berwick rhyme of *Pearlin Jean* has authentic folk simplicity:

O, Pearlin Jean!
O, Pearlin Jean!
She haunts the house,
She haunts the green,
And glowers on me
Wi her wul-cat een.

Whether the ghost had been a lace-maker, or was dressed in lace (pearlin), or looked like lace, has a fascinating uncertainty, but her wild-cat eyes are a folk poet's image from a time when people really did believe in ghosts.

Some rhymes are borderline. If you believe in them they can be charms; if not, they can be looked upon as verses inherited by children, like this churning rhyme:

Come, butter, come,
Come, butter, come!
Peter stands at the gate,
Waiting for a buttered cake.
Come, butter, come!

WILLIAM MONTGOMERIE

FURTHER READING: Iona and Peter Opie, *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1951); Norah and William Montgomerie, *The Hogarth Book of Scottish Nursery Rhymes* (Hogarth Press, 1964).

Adult Code of Joviality

It can safely be stated that the overwhelming majority of nursery rhymes were not in the first place composed for children; in fact many are survivals of an adult code of joviality, and in their original wording were, by present standards, strikingly unsuitable for those of tender years. They are fragments of ballads or of folk songs ('One misty moisty morning' and 'Old woman, old woman, shall we go a-shearing?'). They are remnants of ancient custom and ritual ('Ladybird, ladybird', and 'We'll go to the wood'), and may hold the last echoes of long-forgotten evil ('Where have you been all day?' and 'London Bridge'). Some are memories of street cry and mummers' play ('Young lambs to sell! young lambs to sell!' and 'On Christmas night I turned the spit').... One ('Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John') is a prayer of Popish days, another ('Go to bed, Tom') was a barrack room refrain. They have come out of taverns and mug houses. ('Nose, nose, jolly red nose' still flaunts the nature of its early environment.)

Iona and Peter Opie ed
The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes

NYMPHS

GENERALLY REGARDED as goddesses of subordinate status, nymphs are personifications of human feminine youth, invested with magical charm, beauty and dread, and often, of course, with superhuman power. They belong to the oldest and deepest layers of Greek popular religion, mythology and folklore, populating seas, rivers and springs, caves, trees and mountains, in fact Nature in all its aspects. In Greek 'nymph' means simply a young girl, a bride (and, in a secondary sense, a nurse).

The Oceanides, nymphs of the ocean, were looked upon as daughters of Ocean himself. A band of them forms the chorus of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*. After he has been chained to the rock, Prometheus invokes all the forces of Nature. He hears strange sounds in the distance:

> A faint sound, a fragrance, is floating about me.
> Is it god or man? Who is it that seeks me out,
> Visiting this desolate edge of earth,
> Spectator of my agony? It must be so.
> Then see imprisoned here an ill-starred god –
> The detested of Zeus, the rejected of all who walk in
> The heavenly courtyards, one that held mankind too dear! Ah!
> Yet again that murmur! The air is astir with
> The whisper of hurrying wings. How fearful is all that approaches!

The chorus of ocean nymphs then enters, performing a dance as if riding sea-horses. They address the tormented Prometheus:

> You need not fear us, we are friends. Our father said no, but
> We pleaded, then in haste took to the air,
> Breathlessly beating long wings,
> And on and on raced with the wind,
> Riding the crests of the mountain breezes.
> We heard the dull strokes of a hammer through the sea-caves,
> And we leapt a horse without time to remember manners,
> Each foot in the stirrup without a sandal.

They are still with him, impulsively sympathetic and loyal, at the end of the play, when Prometheus, refusing to disclose his secret, is caught up in the earthquake of Zeus. 'No, no, we refuse to desert him, we stay at his side to the end; for of all vile things in the world the worst is a traitor.' The young nymphs as it were counterpoise the most generous and tender impulses of Nature against anger and violence directed against the weak and vulnerable.

The Nereids were the daughters of Nereus, the wise old man of the sea. Traditionally, there were 50 of these marine nymphs of the Mediterranean, dwelling with their father in the depths of the sea, lovely young goddesses, kindly to sailors. One of their number was Thetis, the mother of Achilles, who also befriended both Dionysus and Hephaestus. Brought up by Hera, she was obliged by Zeus and Hera to marry Peleus, a mortal. The story of the marriage illustrates a common folktale motif of the fairy or nymph won through guile and struggle, at least for a period of time. Thetis, like other sea creatures, had the power of self-transformation, but Peleus, instructed by Chiron, the wise old centaur, held her fast until she promised to marry him.

After the birth of Achilles, Thetis returned to the sea, but emerged again from time to time to give him comfort and succour. At the end of the *Odyssey*, the ghost of Agamemnon tells how Thetis came up from the sea with the other Nereids to join in the mourning at the funeral of Achilles, and brought a golden urn for his bones, a gift from Dionysus, made by the smith god, Hephaestus.

Different from the nymphs of the broad ocean and the sea were the Naiads, the nymphs of running water, of rivers and springs. These are the divine counterparts of the human girls who regularly purified themselves at such places before religious ceremonies or who, as brides, bathed before their weddings in rivers or in water brought from them. There were also the Oreads or Orestiads, special mountain nymphs, and the Dryads and Hamadryads, who were closely involved with trees and tree cults.

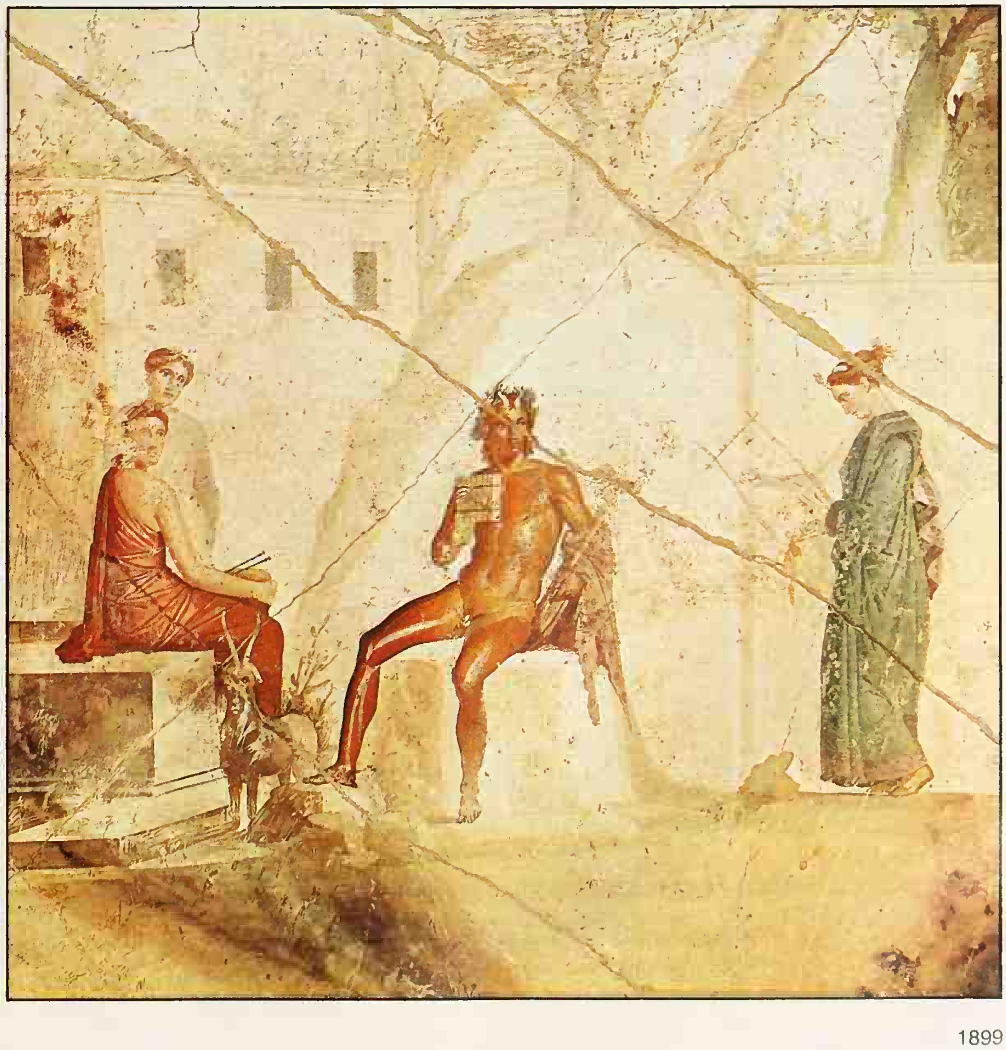
As M. P. Nilsson pointed out (in *Greek Popular Religion*), Artemis is a great goddess very similar to the nymphs and is traditionally accompanied by nymphs. She haunts mountains and meadows, and is connected with the tree cult, with springs and rivers. She protects women in childbirth and watches over little children. She was leader of the nymphs; small wonder that she was a popular goddess, nymph incarnate. She took the young of all creatures under her care and a choral passage in the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus portrays her anger at the sight of two eagles tearing a hare with her unborn litter in the womb.

Artemis was known as a bear goddess in various parts of the ancient world in a ritual associated with initiation and marriage. In Arcadia, the mother of Arcas, after whom the district was named, was changed into a bear shortly before he was born. The mother's name was that of the nymph Callisto, properly an epithet of Artemis. Artemis Brauronia had her temple at Brauron in Attica. Here girls, dressed in saffron, performed a bear dance before they were married (see BEAR; DIANA).

It has been reasonably argued that the bear goddess belonged to the ancient Pelasgians, who brought her to Arcadia from Attica, to Attica from Lemnos, and ultimately from the shores of the Black Sea, reaching the Aegean by way of the Propontis, now known as the Sea of Marmara, which connects the Black Sea with the Aegean. It has been argued that she was identified with Artemis because of the influence of the Ephesian fertility goddess.

Evidence which has come to light in recent years has further suggested the possibility that the Cretans perpetuated a similar

Personifications of feminine youth, charm and beauty, the nymphs come from the oldest and deepest layers of Greek popular religion and stand for 'the most generous and tender impulses of Nature': fresco of Pan with nymphs



Scala

association in the neighbourhood of the peninsula of Akrotiri, north-east of Canea, now the island's capital city. A local myth implies a ritual involving a sacred bear, a cult of a divine nursing-mother in a cave, whose worshippers were pre-Dorian. The myth and the ritual could be associated with the cave on Akrotiri called Arkoudia, 'Cave of the She-bear', described under that name by travellers for several centuries.

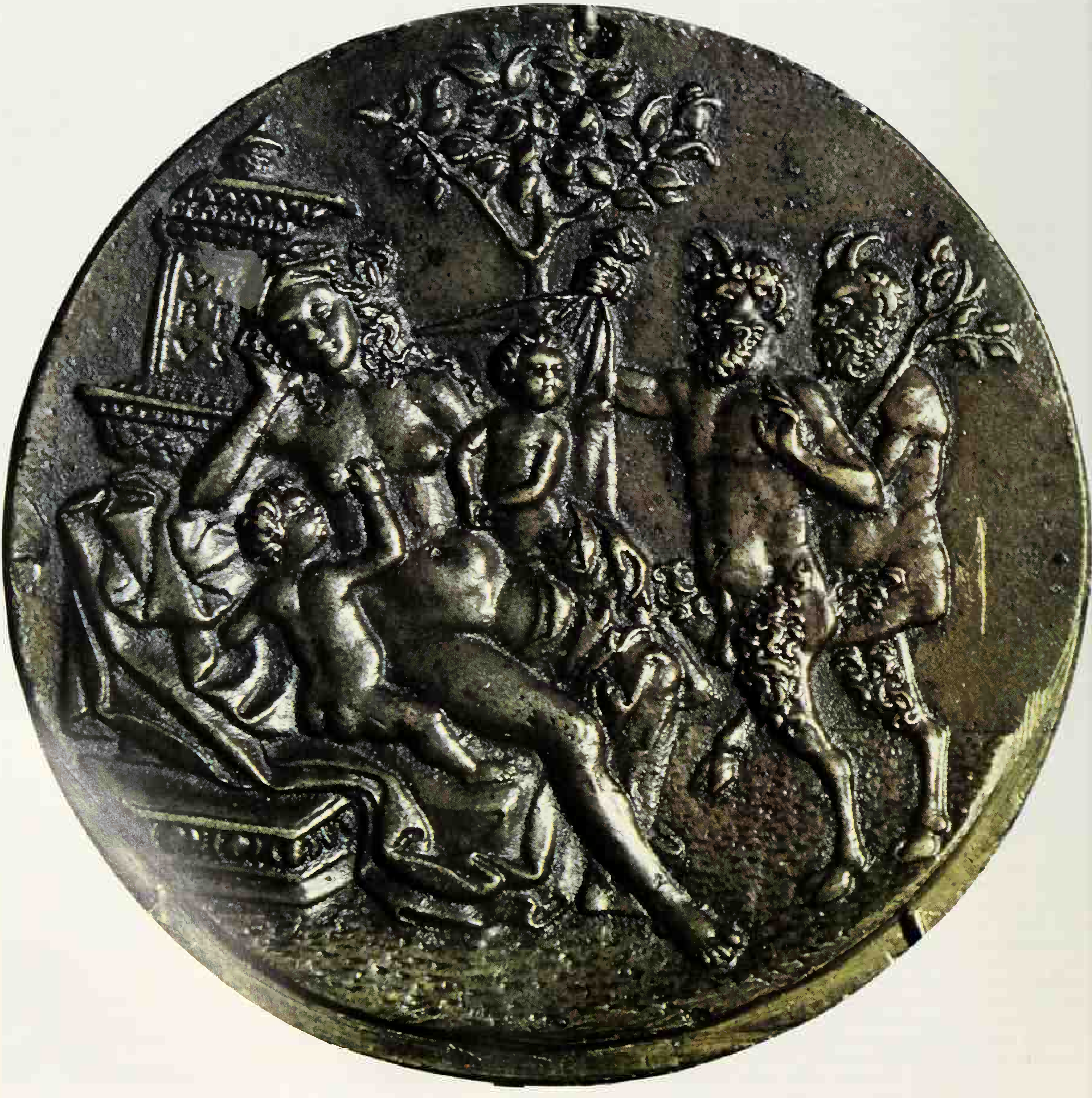
The old traditional sphere of the nymphs was to look after mortals in the days of their youth. They were mothers and nurses of heroes and they were also said to look after infant gods. As Homer says in his Hymn to Dionysus:

> I will begin my song about Dionysus, the ivy-crowned,
> Loudly-clamouring god, the glorious son of Zeus and of
> Far-famed Semele, who was received in their arms by long-haired
> Nymphs from his father, their lord, and they fostered and cherished him tenderly
> In the valleys of Nysa . . .

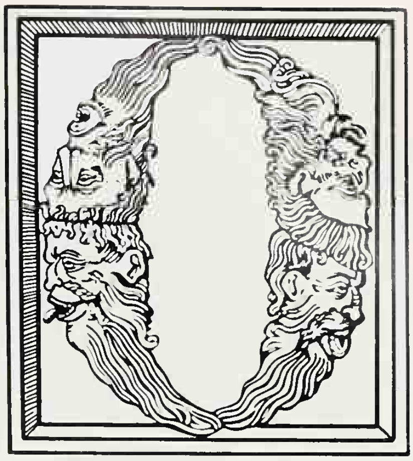
The infant Zeus was also tenderly nurtured and legends of his childhood show the close relationship between nymphs and wild creatures. After his birth in a Cretan cave, it was said, the baby Zeus was fed by a pig or by doves or by bees or a goat. Two nymphs, Melissa and Amalthea, supposedly the daughters of Melisseus, King of Crete, reared the infant on the milk of a goat. Amalthea made him a golden ball and put him to sleep in a golden cradle.

Tradition said that in Crete there was a cave sacred to bees, where Rhea gave birth to Zeus, which neither god nor man might enter. The cave was occupied by sacred bees, nurses of Zeus, and the god fed on honey. It is possible to argue that this story was replaced later by the legend of the nymphs, who retained the title *melissai*, bees.

R. F. WILLETTS



Some nymphs were connected with the sea, others with mountains or trees. The nymphs of rivers and springs were divine counterparts of human girls who purified themselves there. As spirits of the pulsing life of Nature, the nymphs were the companions of the lustful satyrs: medallion of a sleeping nymph with satyrs



Stephen Dalton/N.H.P.A.

In Germany anyone found damaging an oak was put to death: the long-standing belief that it was unlucky to cut an oak stemmed from the awe in which this tree was held all over Europe

Strong and imposing, the oak tree has been worshipped from very ancient times

OAK

FROM PRIMITIVE TIMES to those of the Druids the oak, strong, durable and very long lived, was undoubtedly the chief sacred tree all over Europe and Scandinavia. The oak was associated with the myth of Balder because the sacred mistletoe, the mysterious 'golden bough' by which the Scandinavian god was slain, grew on its branches (see BALDER; MISTLETOE). Balder was perhaps a later version of a primitive tree deity, who had to be sacrificed in order to ensure fertility of crops and men. In later times this ritual was worked into a kind of mummers' play associated with May Day, in which the tree spirit, enveloped in leafy oak boughs, was executed.

Several references in the Bible indicate that oaks were important to the earliest worshippers of Yahweh, as when Jacob buries the 'foreign gods' and the ear-rings of his household under the oak of Shechem (Genesis 35.4). The followers of Baal sacrificed below an oak tree or in an oak grove – 'under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing odour to all their idols' (Ezekiel 6.13).

One of the most famous oracles of ancient Greece, that of Zeus at Dodona in the north-east, was in an oak wood, and the priestess had her temple under an enormous oak, the rustling of whose leaves she interpreted in answer to questions. The Argonauts' ship Argo was built of oaks from this grove, and one timber could speak and advise the voyagers. Socrates swore by the oak, as the sacred oracle tree; Homer describes how people made solemn agreements under an oak because it was a place of security; and oak wreaths were worn by those taking part in the Mysteries of Eleusis (see ELEUSIS) at the temple of Demeter.

A possible parallel with the Balder myth may be seen in ancient Italy, where in the Arician Grove there lived the King of the Wood (see KING). The same grove was also the home of the water nymph Egeria, described by Plutarch as one of the oak nymphs who lived in every oak grove. Egeria married King Numa in the sacred grove. J. G. Frazer considered this 'a reminiscence of a sacred marriage which the old Roman kings regularly contracted with a goddess of vegetation and water for the purpose of enabling him to discharge his divine or magical functions', and pointed out 'how very often in early society the king is held responsible for the fall of rain and the fruitfulness of the earth'. In Roman times oak boughs were carried at weddings to ensure a fruitful marriage.

Later on, the oak became the sacred tree of the Romans, and Jupiter was reputedly sheltered by an oak at his birth. Acorns were widely held to have been the first of man's foods and legend tells how Ceres – the Roman goddess of agriculture (see DEMETER) – replaced them with corn; to recognize man's debt to the acorn, oak was worn at festivals in honour of Ceres and by reapers as they harvested. Romans who had saved the life of a fellow citizen were granted an oak leaf crown, which gave them many privileges.

Pliny describes how sacred the oak was to the Gauls and their Druid priests (see DRUIDS); so deep went its power that in the 8th century the missionary St Boniface had to destroy a sacred oak at Hesse in Germany. However, St Columcille, when destroying the worldly town of Derry, saved its oak wood from fire. In Ireland the oak was one of the Seven Noble Trees, which could not be destroyed without payment of a fine.

In ancient Germany anyone discovered damaging an oak was punished in a horrible way, as Frazer tells us: his navel was cut out and nailed to the wound in the tree, and the offender was then driven round the tree till his intestines were wound round the trunk – a wound for a wound, man's death for the tree's life.

In later centuries the ancient sacredness of the oak left a deep-seated fear of damaging or cutting them down. John Aubrey (1626–97) mentions how 'When an oak is felling, it gives a kind of shriek or groans, that may be heard a mile off, as if it were the genius of the oak lamenting.' He adds, in a circumstantial aside, 'E. Wyld, Esq., hath heard it several times.'

Protection Against Lightning

In Scandinavia the oak was sacred to Thor, and for this reason was known as the 'thunder tree'. In many places the oak is thought to ensure safety from lightning, although it is in fact more prone to being struck than most trees (perhaps because it lives longer), and a Sussex rhyme has the line: 'Beware the oak: it draws the stroke.' But superstition dies hard, and oak branches

Oak leaves play their part in the ritual observed by Druids at Stonehenge on Midsummer Day; the reverence of the ancient Druids for the oak is mentioned by the Roman author Pliny

British Tourist Authority

Homer Sykes

Traditions connected with Oak-Apple Day, the anniversary of the restoration of Charles II, are thought to derive from much older ceremonies *Left* Villagers of Wishfort in Wiltshire still wear a garland of oak leaves round their hats on Oak-Apple Day *Right* At Castleton, Derbyshire, the day is marked by a procession led by a 'king' bearing a flower-covered frame; eventually the frame is hoisted onto a pinnacle of the church tower, the other pinnacles being decorated with branches of oak

were formerly kept in houses to protect them from lightning. Later these were replaced by acorns, and the acorn-shape of the bobbin on pull-down blinds was in the same way originally intended to be protective. If an oak did happen to be struck by lightning, pieces of its timber became especially protective as a result.

Not surprisingly, oaks or their leaves protected from witchcraft. The Venerable Bede recorded how the heathen King Ethelbert made St Augustine preach to him under an oak, rather than indoors, so that the king would be safe from any spell the unfamiliar Christians might try to cast on him.

The marriage oak is often mentioned in folklore: newly married couples would dance round such a tree for luck. This was a relic of pagan wedding ceremonies under the sacred oak. Another relic of the past is the gospel oak, a single tree at a point on a parish boundary. The numerous places with this name make it clear that when, on Rogation Day, processions went round 'beating the bounds' of the parish, a short service in which verses from the gospels were read took place under each of these boundary trees. There were other Christianized oaks, such as one in Leicestershire which has left the name Holy Oakes, and one in Shropshire at a place now called Cressage: in Domesday Book this appears as Cristesache, that is, Christ's oak. There were also cross oaks, planted at crossroads, which had the reputation of curing certain illnesses.

By the 17th century little was left of oak worship but superstition. Veneration of the oak seems to have been revived indirectly by Charles II, by way of the Boscobel oak, which saved him when he hid in its branches after his defeat at the battle of Worcester. In 1664, after Charles's restoration to the throne, 29 May became known as Shick-shack Day, Royal Oak Day or Oak-Apple Day. On this day, the date of Charles's birthday and of his return to England, it was necessary to wear a 'shick-shack', an oak twig, if possible bearing an oak-apple. Anyone without this token was liable to be beaten with nettles. In the afternoon the oak twig was replaced by a bunch of ash leaves. This is with very little doubt a relic of a much older ceremony, like the mummers' plays previously mentioned: it may be the termination of the May rituals, which had begun on May Day with the 'Green Man', the 'Man in the Oak', 'Jack in the Green' or 'King of May' – destined to be sacrificed under whatever name (see GREEN). It will be noted that the leaves usually carved around those curious heads to be seen in many churches, which represent the Green Man, are usually oak leaves.

It is interesting to see the association of oak with ash in the 'shick-shack' custom. It is more familiar in the old weather rhyme:

> If the oak comes before the ash,
> We shall only have a splash.
> If the ash comes before the oak,
> We are sure to have a soak.

Oak was the material used for starting the need fire, whose usual purpose was to curb an outbreak of disease among men or farm animals. All other fires in the district had to be put out, and the need fire was lit by rubbing together pieces of oak wood or a piece each of oak and fir (see FIRE).

The burning of a Yule-log is almost certainly a survival of the fire festival of the winter solstice; the log was often of oak. This festival was concerned with ensuring luck, protection and fertility to farm and household in the coming year, and the charred wood and ashes left after the burning acquired special qualities.

The oak is an important symbol in dream interpretation, and normally a favourable one. To dream of a leafy oak means a long and happy life; of one bearing acorns, wealth; of many young oaks, several courageous sons. But a dream of a withered oak foretells poverty in old age, and of a blasted oak, sudden death. In the language of flowers an oak tree signifies hospitality (a sentiment transmitted pictorially, one imagines) and oak leaves indicate bravery.

A. J. HUXLEY

Though they now have degenerated for the most part to meaningless profanities, oaths were once regarded as full of occult power: the supernatural sanction invoked in the oath acted as a guarantee of good faith

OATH

THE IDEA THAT TRUTH – or for that matter, virtue – can be its own reward is a relatively modern principle of morality. In the past it was taken almost for granted that no individual in his right senses would be likely to act in a manner contrary to his own interests, and for this reason a man's solemn word was not considered an acceptable token of his intentions unless it had been reinforced by supernatural sanctions. An oath consisted of a form of words capable of invoking punishment from the supernatural powers, should the obligation contained in them not be carried out. The oath has been described as 'essentially a conditional self-imprecation, a curse by which a person calls down upon himself some evil in the event of what he says not being true.' In its original form the oath was a magical formula, arising from the power inherent in the cursing words.

Oaths take a wide variety of forms. They involve calling upon a god or gods, or upon the psychic force contained in some ritual object or symbol of power, but they can also be self-imprecatory as in the familiar children's declaration: 'Cross my heart and hope to die.'

The oath which is sworn by or on some sacred, divine or even dangerous authority is intended to establish contact with its power, which can then be turned against the one who violates his given word. Developments of this are the oaths sworn upon Yahweh or Allah, or that in which the Comanche Indian calls upon the Great Spirit as witness to the truth. Similarly in New Guinea the tribal gods are commissioned to take immediate vengeance upon any oath-breaker.

In other cases it is not so much the god who is invoked as the sacred object with which he is associated, and this is reverently touched at the time that it is sworn upon. The particular object varies in accordance with whatever happens to be considered of psychic importance in a particular community. The early Hebrews, for example, swore upon their genitalia, the symbols of procreative power, while in the modern courtroom the witness takes the oath upon the Bible. Despite the identification of this principle with the higher forms of religion, it represents a clear relic of the older system of magic by touch, the punishment arising not so much from the outraged god as from the inherent power of the object itself.

One example of this type of oath is the Gold Coast ordeal in which the accused is given an article of food which 'in some way appertains to a deity, who is then invoked to visit a breach of faith with punishment'.

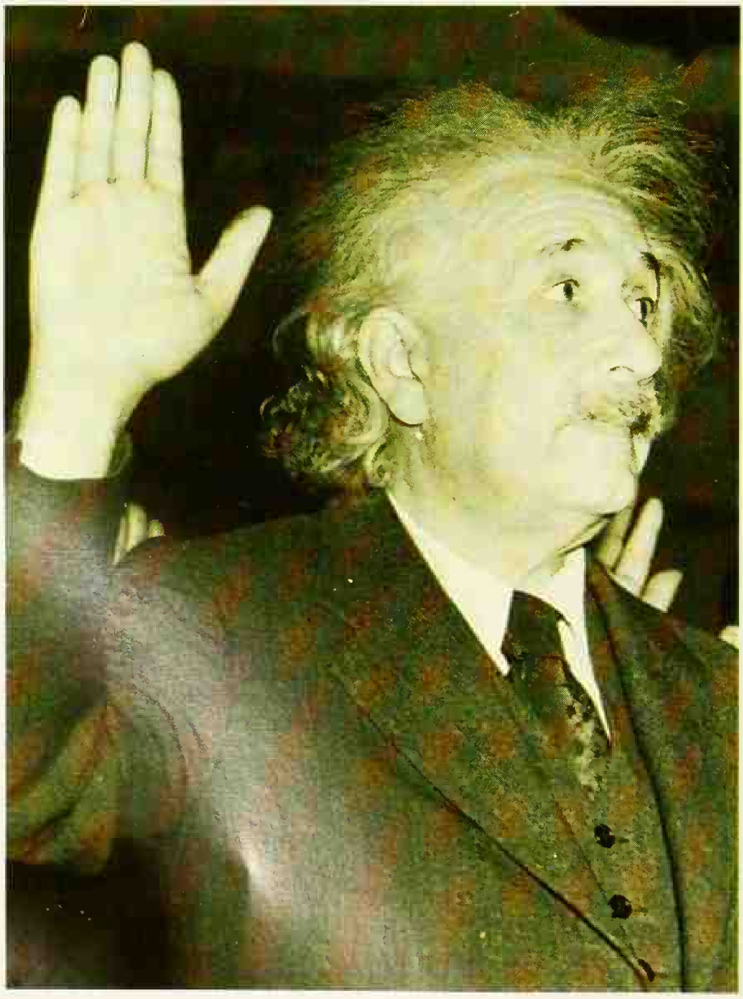
The same principle underlay the medieval custom in which an accused person would eat the host, praying at the same time that it might choke him if he were not telling the truth. In one medieval form of ordeal a piece of consecrated bread made from unleavened barley was swallowed by the suspect and any violation of the truth was supposed to choke the perjurer or to rack his body with convulsions.

This form of oath depended upon the transmission of a curse into the body of the bread so that it would work upon the perjurer. A well-known English example of the practice was that involving the witch Joan Flower, who strove to defend herself from hanging by calling for the ordeal of bread and butter, wishing that 'it might never go through her if she were guilty'. In the event she 'fell down and died as she was carried to Lincoln Jail'.

Trial by Ordeal

The Emperor Charlemagne was strongly in favour of the Judgement of the Cross, a ceremony in which the accused, having declared his innocence upon oath, took up one of two sticks wrapped in fine wool from the altar, one bearing the concealed mark of a cross while the other was unmarked. If he picked up the stick marked with the cross his innocence was established beyond all doubt in the sight of God and man, but if he took

Left Albert Einstein takes the oath of allegiance on becoming an American citizen
Right An accused witch, tried by ordeal in Kenya: if the frog refuses to slip down the man's throat, he is proved innocent, but if it is swallowed, he is judged guilty



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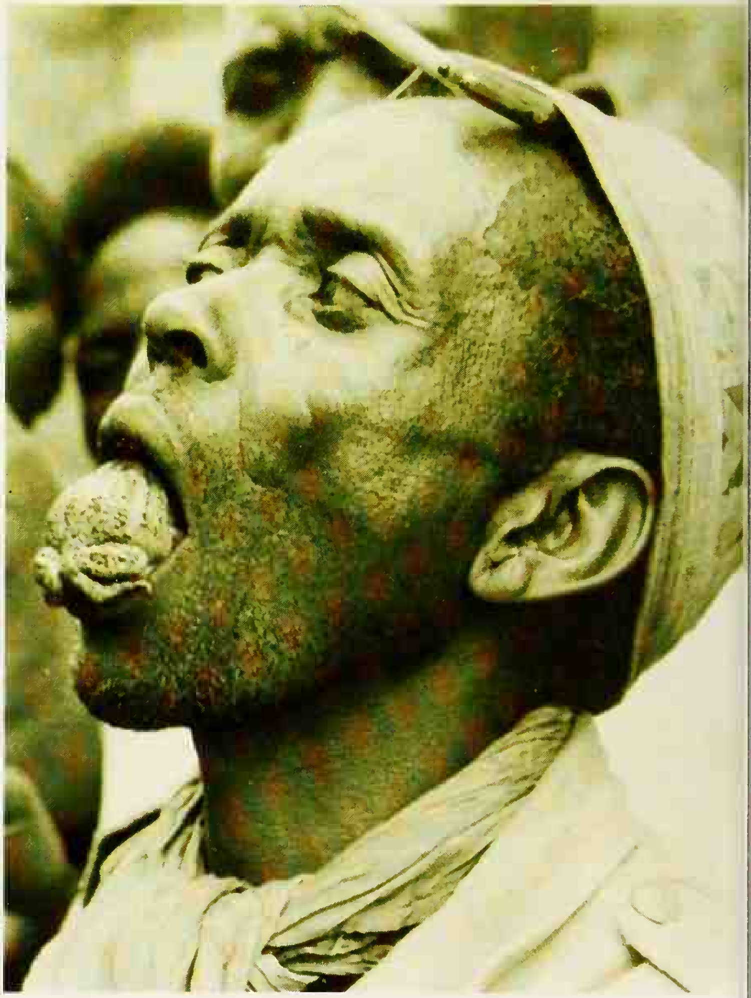


the other he was judged guilty and punished accordingly.

The legal theorists of medieval Europe made a clear distinction between the spoken and the written oath and that which had been ratified by contact with a sacred object, such as a holy relic. To use the words of one historian: 'So little respect was felt for the simple oath that the adjuncts came to be looked upon as the essential features and the imprecation itself to be divested of binding force without them.'

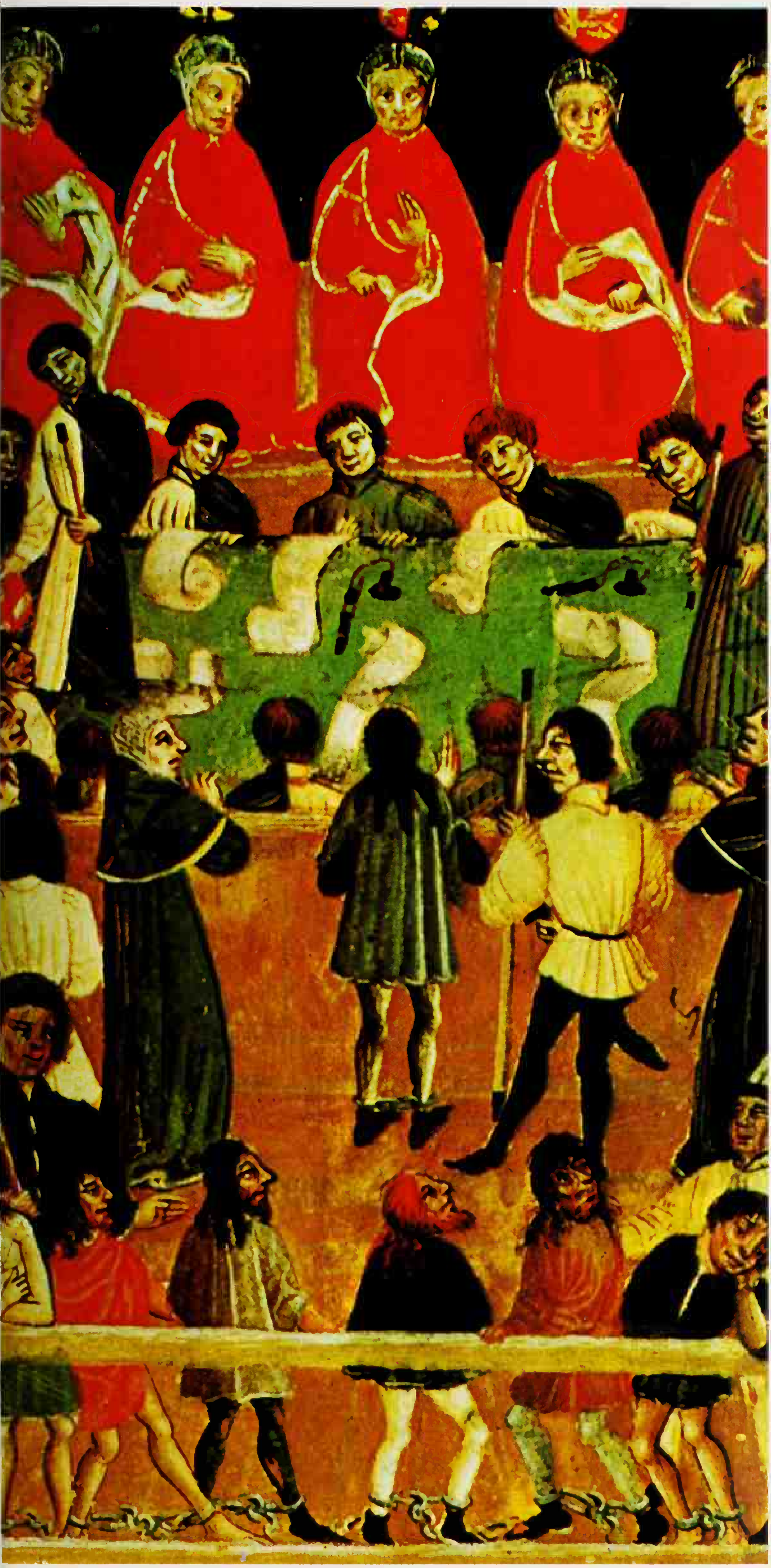
The older magical principles continued to manifest themselves in medieval jurisprudence. A well-known example was the judgement of trial by ordeal, in which the accused was made to immerse his arm up to the elbow in boiling water to supplement the oath of innocence, in the expectation that God would protect him from the injury if he really was innocent. At an earlier period the accused would be blindfolded and compelled to walk barefooted over nine red-hot ploughshares; if unhurt he would be adjudged as having told the truth. A further expression of the same principle was trial by combat or wager by battle, in which the accused, having taken his oath of innocence, fought out the issue fully armed in the lists and if triumphant was regarded as completely vindicated. On the other hand, to be defeated was evidence of guilt.

Blood Covenant

The covenant is another form of oath-taking, consisting of a mutual oath or a mutual conditional curse: each party conveys the curse to the other should he violate the conditions of the engagement. The binding effect of the covenanting oath is familiar in the rites of secret societies, the best known modern example being that of the Mau Mau movement in Kenya (see KIKUYU). This type of oath-taking is often reinforced by the most fearful ceremonies and includes the blood covenant, which demands either the drinking or sharing of blood. According to Herodotus (c 485–425 BC) the Medes and the Lydians, when taking an oath, made flesh wounds in their arms, following which they drank each other's blood. The signed contract is the modern equivalent of the ancient oath-bound compact or covenant between the parties.

At all times and among most peoples the oath has played an immense part in binding communities together for the achievement of a common purpose. Sometimes an oath involves the allegiance of the subject to his monarch, while the coronation oath, on the other hand, compels the monarch to honour certain obligations towards the state.

The binding effect of an oath was never more apparent than in Nazi Germany, when it secured the allegiance of the officer caste to the Nazi regime. Its power is also demonstrated in the solemn pact sworn by the desperate English naval mutineers at the Nore in 1797, which was so seriously regarded that the same year a repressive



An accused man takes his oath at the court of King's Bench; various forms of trial by ordeal, to test the truth of a prisoner's oath, were accepted features of medieval law

By courtesy: the Treasurer and Masters of the Bench of the Inner Temple law made it an offence punishable by transportation to administer an unlawful oath. This later resulted in the trial and conviction of the Tolpuddle martyrs, who in 1834 were found guilty of swearing men into a trade union lodge at a time when trade unionism was in itself perfectly legal.

So frightening were the imagined consequences of violating an oath that had been made upon some sacred or magical object, that in the past certain individuals were denied the privilege of oath-taking, since any perjury on their part could have severe repercussions upon the community. Among those exempted in Roman society were the priest of Jupiter and the Vestal Virgins.

An example of a primitive legal oath is that of the Samoan who, when accused of theft, solemnly swears: 'In the presence of the chiefs now assembled I lay my hands on the stone. If I stole the thing may I speedily die.' Such a device has often been quite sufficient to bring a culprit to light. Where this technique fails, however, the unknown thief may well become the target of that ancillary to the oath, the solemn curse, of which the following is an example: 'May fire burn the eyes of the one who stole my bananas. May fire burn his eyes and the eyes of his god also.'

Opposition to oath-taking played a not inconsiderable part in the development of legal and social practices. Certain religious groups, like the Quakers, have always contended that the word of truth requires no reinforcement, submitting also that the taking of an oath weakens rather than strengthens any declaration or promise. For support the religious man could turn to the precept of Christ: 'Do not swear at all.' At the other end of the ethical scale the free-thinking Charles Bradlaugh was prepared to stand his ground in the House of Commons and even to be ejected from the House by force rather than take an oath in the name of a deity in which he had no belief. The right to affirm instead of swearing upon the Bible has now been established.

Signed in Blood

'Now look-a-here, Tom, less take and swear to one another – that's what we got to do – swear to keep mum.'

'I'm agreed, Huck. It's the best thing. Would you just hold hands and swear that we –'

'Oh, no, that wouldn't do for this. That's good enough for little rubbishy common things – specially with gals, cuz they go back on you any way, and blab if they get into a huff – but there orter be writing 'bout a big thing like this. And blood.'

Tom's whole being applauded this idea. It was deep, and dark, and awful; the hour, the circumstances, the surroundings, were in keeping with it. He picked up a clean pine shingle that lay in the moonlight, took a little fragment of 'red keel' out of his pocket, got the moon on his work, and painfully scrawled these lines . . .: "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer swears they will keep mum about this and they wish they may Drop down dead in their Tracks if they ever tell and Rot."

. . . Tom unwound the thread from one of his needles, and each boy pricked the ball of his thumb and squeezed out a drop of blood.

In time, after many squeezes, Tom managed to sign his initials, using the ball of his little finger for a pen. Then he showed Huckleberry how to make an H and an F, and the oath was complete.

Mark Twain *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

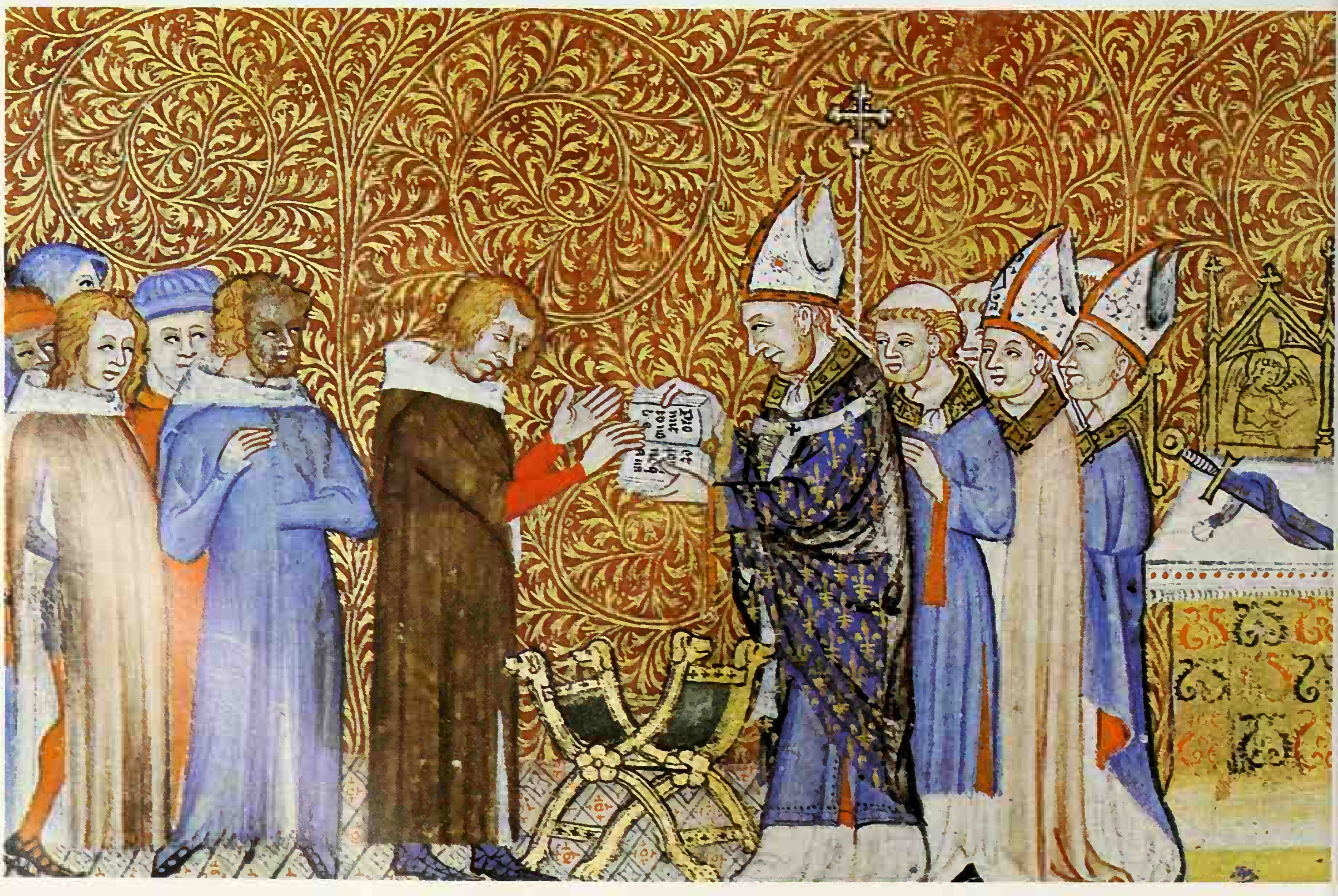
Within the legal system the oath now exists as an appeal to God as witness to the truth of the evidence given, for it must be declared on oath that what is to be said shall be 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth'. Cross-examination of the witness has now taken the place of the primitive ordeal, while the pains of imprisonment have replaced the divine punishment once meted out by an enraged deity.

There is no difference in essence between the oath of the old-time Khond who stood upon his tiger skin and demanded death if he failed to speak the truth, and that of the medieval Englishman with his 'By God!', 'By Jesus!' and 'By the saints above!' Each called upon the supernatural powers as witness to the truth of a declared intention or statement, demanding to be punished if his word were broken. The extent to which the once reverent oath has degenerated into sheer profanity is a reflection of the debasement of old spiritual values as much as of the misuse of words.

(See also CURSE.)

ERIC MAPLE

A medieval king takes the coronation oath: 14th century manuscript in the British Museum



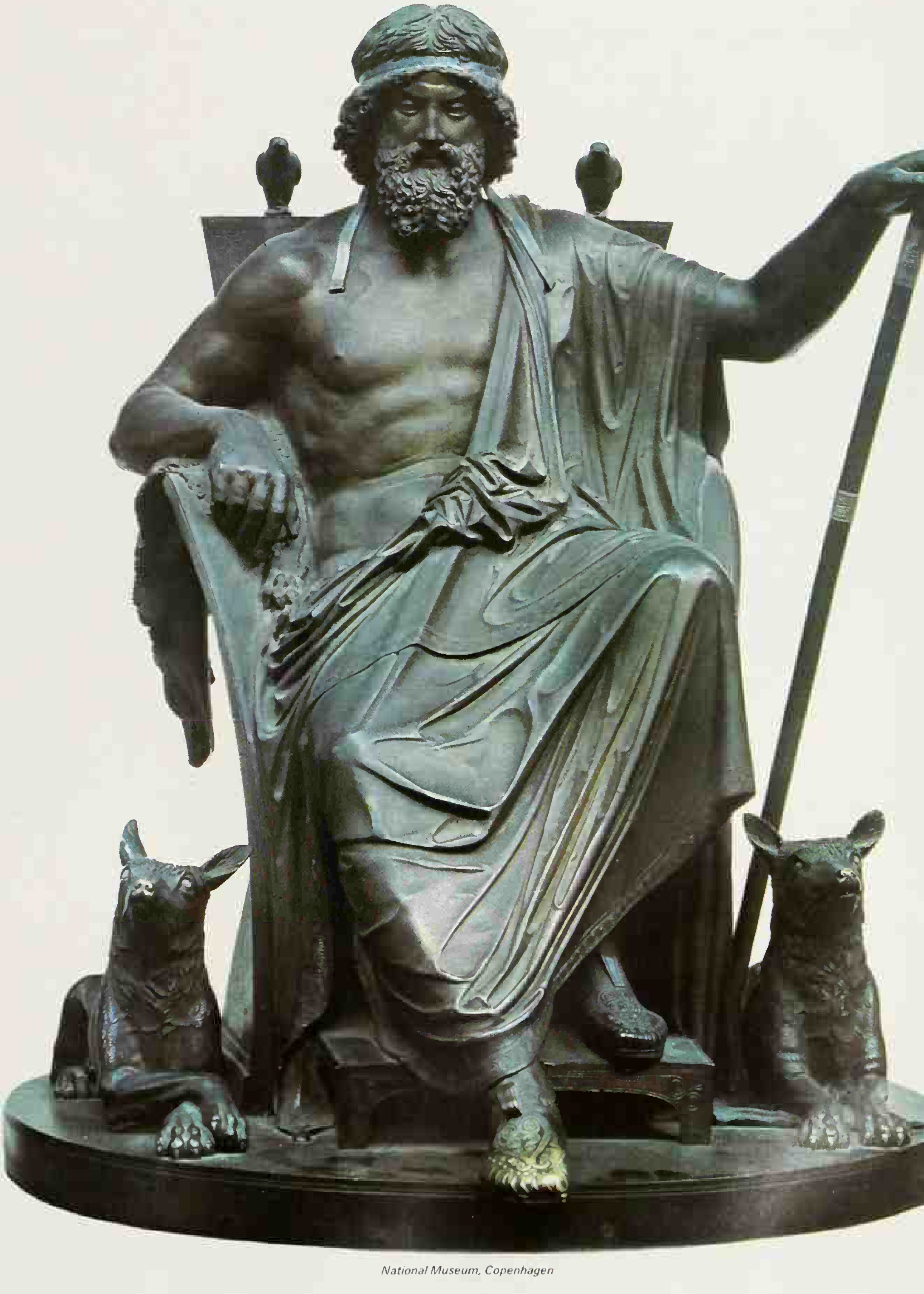
ODIN

GRIM LORD OF VALHALLA

An old man with one eye, dressed in a cloak and broad-brimmed hat; this was the god Odin, whose other eye had been sacrificed in return for wisdom and was kept hidden in the underworld – a story connected with his role as bestower of the arts and learning, and god of the dead

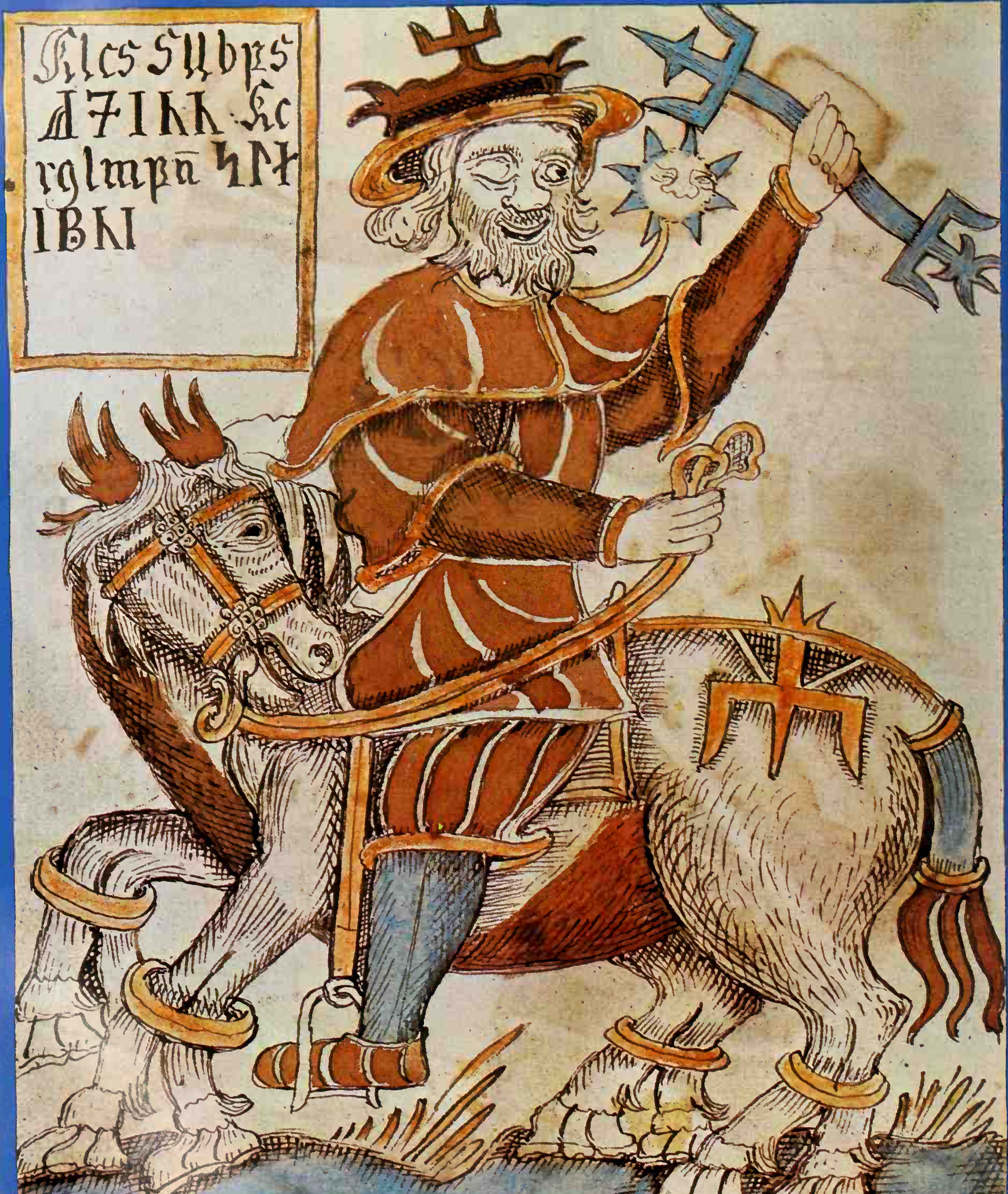
THE GOD Odin stands out as a dominant figure in Scandinavian myth and legend, and scenes and symbols associated with him abound in the pre-Christian art of the Viking Age. He has a double heritage from the Germanic past, taking over from the war god and sky god Tiwaz on the one hand and from Wodan, ruler of the underworld and ancestor of kings, on the other. The wealth of traditions concerning him may be partly due to new influences from Eastern Europe in the Viking Age, imparting fresh vigour to his cult at a time when contacts between Sweden and the East were well established. It is noteworthy that the figure of the god on his eight-legged horse Sleipnir first appears in Scandinavian art on memorial stones of Viking Age date on the Baltic island of Gotland, on the direct route to Russia.

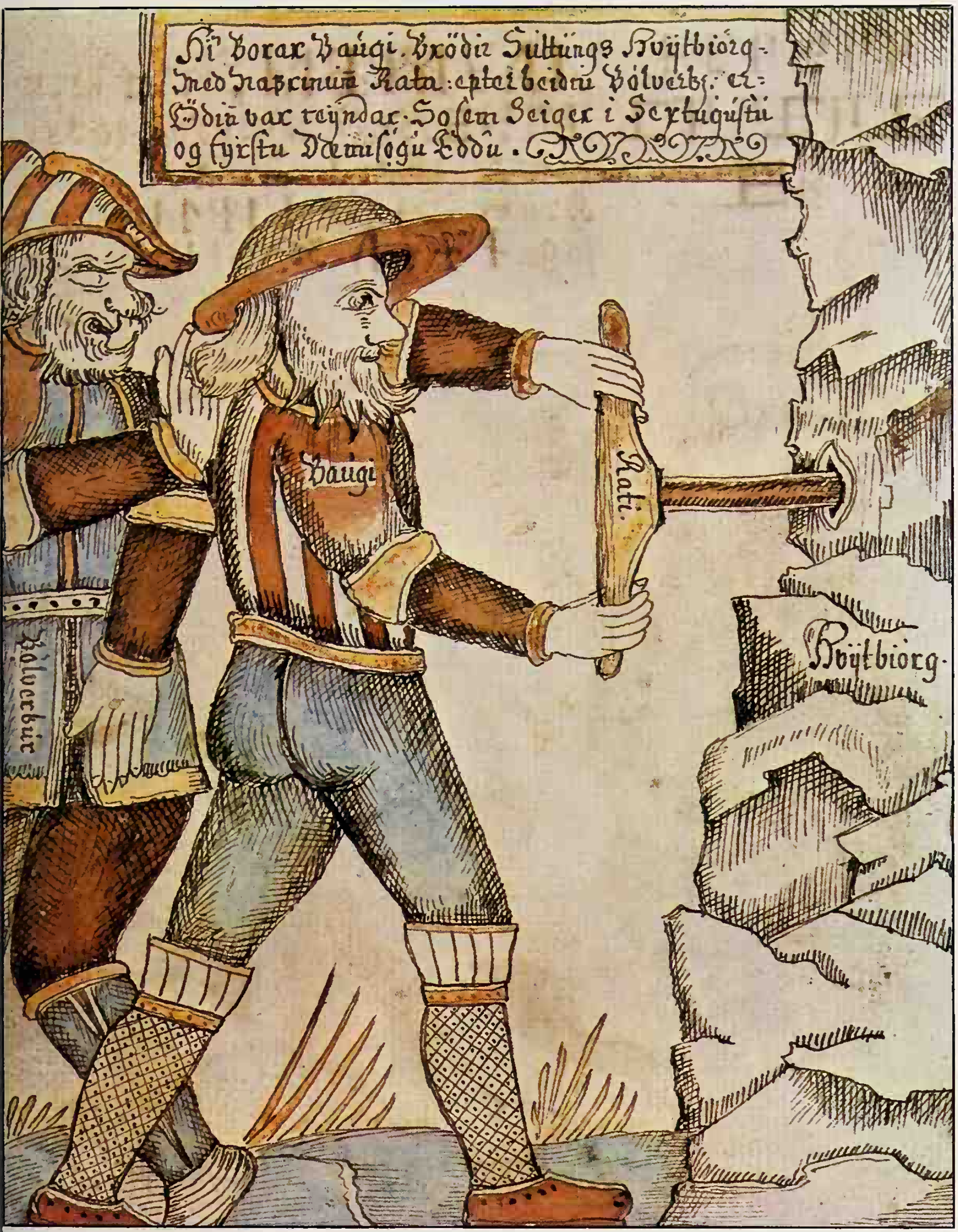
Certainly the cult of Odin as reflected in literature and art is a rich and many-sided one. Odin is the god of the dead, the guide who conducts them to the otherworld, either in his own form or represented by his messengers, the Valkyries. He is also the god of inspiration and ecstasy, who brought mankind the gifts of poetry, oratory and learning. He is the god of battle, inspiring his worshippers, the warrior princes and leaders, with fanatic loyalty. Sometimes, in spite of his association with the dead, he is seen as All-Father, the leader of the gods, and he possesses some of the powers and symbols of the god of the sky. He is a shape-shifter and expert on magic, and he is a travelling god, moving up and down the world and taking an active interest in the affairs of men, while he also journeys beyond



This statue of Odin emphasizes the god's majestic aspect as All-Father and leader of the Norse gods. At his shoulders are the two ravens which every day flew round the world and reported to Odin what they had seen. The two wolves which accompanied the god symbolized, like the ravens, Odin's association with the battlefield, for these creatures fed on the corpses of the slain

National Museum, Copenhagen




Hr borar Baugi. brödir Suttungs Hnitbiorg-
med nafrinum Rata: eptir beidni Bölverks. er:
Ödin var reyndar. So sem seiger i Sextugustu
og fyrstu Dæmisögu Eddu.
Baugi
Rati.
Hnitbiorg.
Bölverkur

Royal Library, Copenhagen

Far left Odin was a travelling god, an observer of the affairs of men who also visited the realm of the dead; here the one-eyed god is shown on his eight-legged horse Sleipnir, on which he journeyed faster than the wind
Left Baugi drills a hole in the stone mountain within which his brother giant had hidden the mead of inspiration. Odin was then able to enter the mountain in the form of a snake and steal the precious liquid, which gave him the gift of poetic inspiration and oratory

it and visits the realm of the dead in order to learn hidden secrets.

Men and animals were sacrificed to Odin, and he himself claimed to have been sacrificed by his own special rites, pierced by a spear as he hung from a tree, that he might win knowledge for gods and men. He moved among the heroes as an old man with one eye, dressed in a cloak and a broad-brimmed hat. It was said that he had given up his other eye in return for wisdom and that it was hidden in the well of Mimir, the ancient guardian of the underworld.

Bodies Hung from Trees

Sacrifice indeed formed an integral part of Odin's cult. In one legendary tale of a certain King Vikar, the king had promised a sacrifice to the god in return for a favourable wind, but when lots were drawn to find the victim, he was the chosen man. He decided to stage a mock sacrifice, standing upon a tree trunk with a rope of calf's intestines round his neck, fastened to a tree which was held down beside him. The warrior conducting the sacrifice touched the king with a rod, dedicating him to Odin, and immediately the intestines became a strong cord and the rod a spear, so that the king was pierced through and the tree sprang back into position, carrying the body of the slain man high among the branches. Just such a sacrificial scene as this is carved on one of the Gotland stones, with the eagle, symbol of Odin, hovering above; the twisted knot, Odin's symbol, is shown above the scene. In the 11th century history of Adam of Bremen the writer quotes the testimony of an old man of 70 who could remember in his youth seeing the bodies of men and animals hanging from trees in the sacred grove at Old Uppsala, the sacred place of the Swedes, after one of the great festivals of the gods.

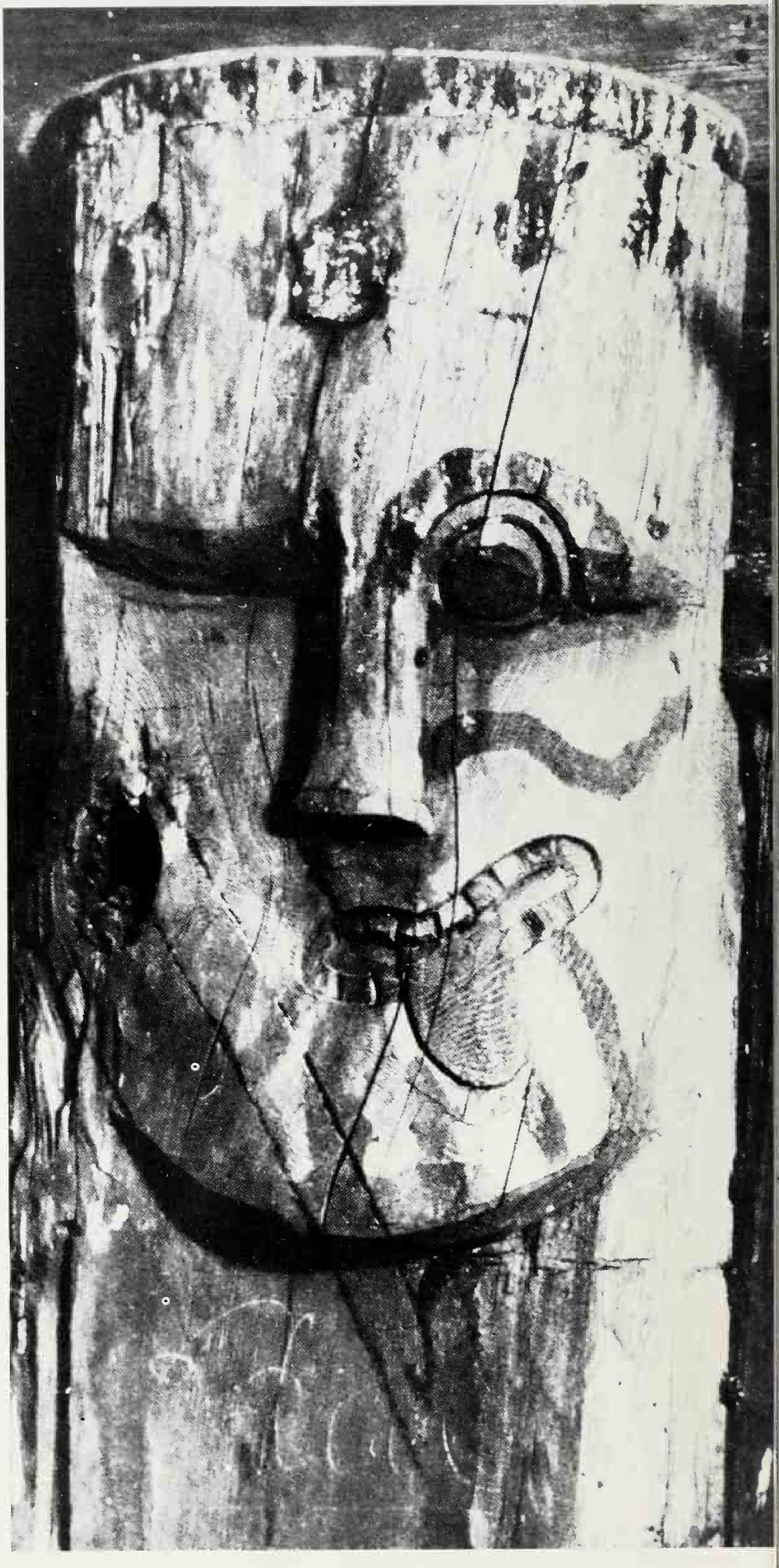
There also exists a dramatic account by an eyewitness of the sacrifice of a young woman at the funeral of a chief of the Rus, the Scandinavian settlers in Russia, about 922 AD on the middle Volga. The chief was given temporary burial while preparations went on for the funeral ceremony, when he was to be burned on his ship in the river, and one of his slave-women volunteered to die with him. She was feted and pampered until the day of the funeral, but her end was a grim one. After an elaborate ceremony in which the entry to the otherworld was enacted, when she described her relatives and her dead husband awaiting her there and sang a long farewell to her companions on earth, she was stabbed by an old woman called the Angel of Death, while at the same time a cord was drawn tight around her neck until she died. Her body was placed on the ship beside her master, together with various animals sacrificed with her.

This picture of a splendid and barbaric funeral among the Eastern Vikings is fully in keeping with what appears in Scandinavian literature concerning the cult of Odin, whose followers were said to be burned with their choicest possessions that they might pass rapidly to the realm of the god. There is also a persistent literary tradition of suttee, implying that not only warriors who died in battle but also women who were courageous enough to be slain with their husbands might be welcomed in Odin's kingdom. Several archeological finds from the pre-Christian Viking Age suggest that a woman has been sacrificed at the funeral of a chieftain, in particular one in the Isle of Man and one in Orkney.

Rage of the Berserkers

The fierce joy with which devotees of Odin met their end is characteristic of the madness and ecstasy with which he inspired his followers. The tradition of the berserkers, who fought in the skins of animals instead of armour, howled like wolves in the combat and were impervious to wounds while the battle fury possessed them, goes back before the Viking Age, but it was still vividly remembered in the later literature. It is said that there were berserkers in the royal bodyguard of Harald Fairhair of Norway in the 9th century, with a special place on the king's warship. Legends of shape-shifting are probably associated with the berserker tradition: there is the story of Sigmund the Volsung, for instance, who lived out in the woods with his son while he planned vengeance against the man who slew his father and brothers, when it is said that the two wore wolf-skins and spoke the speech of wolves; or of the great champion Bodvar, who lay sleeping in his tent while a huge

Men sacrificed to Odin were hung from trees: the lolling tongue of this carved head from a Norwegian church, together with the single eye, links it with the Norse god of the dead



bear fought in his place in the king's army and wreaked havoc among the enemy. The Icelandic sagas have instances of old warriors on the farms who were sometimes overcome with fits of berserk fury which they could not control, when they would destroy anyone who came in their way and were left drained of energy when the rage had spent itself.

Odin sometimes behaves like a shaman of the steppe, the man who in a state of trance can send his spirit to the otherworld and act as emissary between gods and men (see SHAMAN). His voluntary sacrifice on the World Tree suggests the initiation ceremony of such a shaman, while his eight-legged horse resembles the steed which carries the spirit of the shaman to the heavens while his body remains on earth. It is indeed said of Odin that while he lay asleep his spirit could travel in animal form, and he sometimes took on the shape of serpent or eagle to achieve his end.

The Mead of Inspiration

One of the myths tells how Odin won the mead of inspiration for gods and men by his magic powers. This mead had been brewed from the blood of the all-wise giant Kvasir, mixed with honey. The dwarfs who slew him filled three vessels with the magic drink, but it was taken from them by a giant, Suttung, and he shut it within his stone mountain. Odin set off to achieve it by cunning, and in disguise he went among the men of Suttung's brother Baugi as they cut hay. He sharpened their scythes with a wonderful whetstone, so effectively that they began to quarrel over it and ended by cutting each other's throats. Odin took the place of all nine of them, asking no wages except a drink of the magic mead. Baugi agreed but his brother was unwilling, so with Baugi's help Odin bored a hole in the mountain wall, crawled in in the form of a serpent and slept three nights with the giant's daughter, who agreed to give him three drinks of the precious liquid. In three draughts Odin emptied the vessels and then flew away in eagle form to Asgard, where the gods were waiting with a row of vessels to receive it; he spat it into them, and from that time the gift of poetic inspiration and oratory has been his to give to men. Knowledge of the runes, which were bound up with magic spells, was also due to Odin, since he won

King Hakon of Norway, entering Valhalla after death in battle, refused to lay down his weapons since no trust could be placed in Odin

them by his endurance on the World Tree.

Odin, like Wodan before him, was the ancestor of kings, and he would appear to young warrior princes, encouraging them by gifts of special weapons, horses or armour, and instructing them in battle magic and the art of warfare. One of his treasures was the great spear Gungnir, the flight of which decided victory when armies met. There was a tradition that it was a lucky omen to be the first to hurl a spear over the advancing enemy, for this dedicated them to Odin and so ensured victory. But though the god gave aid to his warriors, he was bound to play them false in the end when their time came to fall in battle. The splendid sword given by Odin to the young hero Sigmund the Volsung was shattered by the spear of the god on the battlefield in the end, and Odin himself hurled down Harald War-tooth of Denmark from his chariot, when he had withdrawn his favour and given it to Harald's opponent. Thus the capricious nature of Odin's generosity and his treachery to those who have served him faithfully is stressed in both poetry and prose. The god Loki taunted him with giving victory to cowards who did not merit it, while in a 10th century Norwegian poem King Hakon of Norway, entering Valhalla after death in battle, refused to lay down his weapons since no trust could be placed n Odin. The reason given in the poetry for his faithlessness is his need for great champions in his own realm, against the day when he must lead out his army to do battle with monsters and the enemies of the gods.

The Hall of the Slain

Those who died in sacrifice to Odin, either in battle or by some terrible end like that of the old hero Ragnar Lodbrok, who perished in a snakepit with a song of triumph to Odin on his lips, were said to be welcomed in the hall of Valhalla after death. The Valkyries, the fierce battle-maids of the god who rode to do his will on the battlefield and conduct dead princes back to his realm, welcomed them there with horns of mead, and this scene is pictured many times over on the Gotland memorial stones. It is said in the poems that in Valhalla, the hall of the slain, men fought all day and those who fell were restored again in the evening, when all feasted sumptuously on pork and mead. To a large extent Valhalla appears to be a symbol of death and the grave, in which an everlasting battle is said to take place, rather than any bright palace in the heavens, and it must not be taken to indicate a literal belief in a special kind of immortality. But the idea of kings and high-born warriors joining their ancestors after death and being welcomed by the god they had served is a tradition deeply established in the lore associated with Odin's cult.

Odin was the great magician, the god with the power to bind and loose by means of spells which he laid upon the minds of men. Such spells could cause panic and paralysis at a moment of crisis, or could free the mind from fear and hesitation so that Odin's men emerged triumphant at the time of testing. His symbols are in keeping with his many-sided reputation: the spear, the raven and the wolf because of his connections with battle; the horse and the eagle because of his power to travel between the worlds and over the sky; the three-way knot to signify his power to bind, no doubt associated also with the sinister knot which dispatched his victims; the maiden with a horn or cup in her hand to welcome the dead because of the joyous entry into Odin's realm – a link also with the mead of inspiration.

His cult was primarily an aristocratic one, not a religion of the common people or of the community as a whole like those of Thor and the Vanir. The works of art and the literature which it inspired are such as would emerge from the courts of kings and leaders, and could have been used for the education of young warriors of noble families, proud to remember the exploits of ancient heroes counted among their own ancestors. So it comes about that the sinister figure of the one-eyed god, feared and suspected rather than loved, but followed with wild enthusiasm by those who despised a straw death and sought the wild excitement which he offered, has left an indelible mark on the northern world of myth.

(See also FREYR; GERMANIC MYTHOLOGY; SCANDINAVIA.)

H. R. ELLIS DAVIDSON

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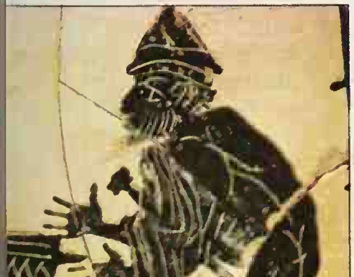


C. M. Dixon

Odysseus

Or Ulysses (from the Latin form of his name), King of Ithaca who was one of the Greek leaders at the siege of Troy; prominent in the *Iliad* and the central character of the *Odyssey*, which describes his adventures on his ten years' journey home after Troy had fallen; later writers tended to depict him as a crafty rogue; he may well have been a real chieftain around whom legends gathered.

See CIRCE; TROY.

National Film Archive

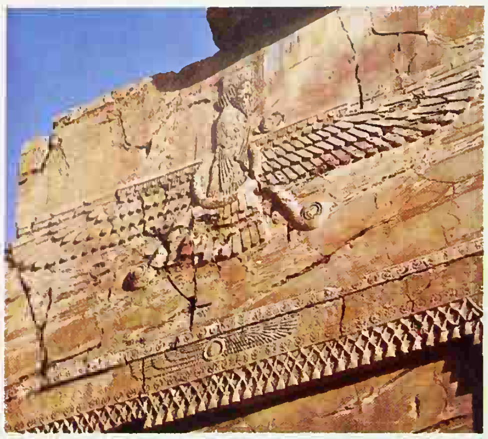
Oedipus

In Greek mythology, a king of Thebes who was fated to kill his father and commit incest with his mother; to prevent this, as a baby he was abandoned in the hills with a spike driven through his feet, hence his name, 'swell-foot'; he grew up unaware of his true parentage, killed his father, Laius, solved the riddle of the Sphinx, and married his mother, Jocasta; when the truth was discovered, he blinded himself, and went into exile; Freud named the 'Oedipus complex' after him.

See INCEST.

In later Zoroastrianism, Ohrmazd takes over the mantle of Ahura Mazdah, creator of heaven and earth; he is the eternal adversary of the Destructive Spirit, over whom he eventually triumphs

OHRMAZD



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Relief of the god Ahura Mazdah from a temple at Persepolis, ancient capital of the Achaemenid kings of Persia: Ahura Mazdah was at first distinguished from his Holy Spirit, but in the course of centuries the two merged to produce the new figure of Ohrmazd

OHRMAZD is the Middle Persian (c 200–700 AD) form for the Zoroastrian God who first appears in the *Avesta* (the sacred book of the Zoroastrians) as Ahura Mazdah, the 'Wise Lord' or the 'Lord Wisdom'. It is not known whether such a god existed before the appearance of the Iranian prophet Zoroaster, who probably flourished in the 6th century BC. It seems, however, most probable that he assumed overriding importance only with Zoroaster himself, who regarded himself as Ahura Mazdah's prophet and believed himself to be in direct communication with the god (see ZOROASTRIANISM).

The oldest part of the *Avesta*, the *Gathas*, is usually considered to be, if not Zoroaster's own words, then at least directly inspired by him; and the centre of this 'revelation' is the god Ahura Mazdah, creator and sustainer of the universe. There are other divine beings beside Ahura Mazdah himself, but these are always subordinated to him and he is sometimes called their 'father'. These divine beings were later formed into a group of seven, who constituted God's 'court'. Originally, however, they seem to have been aspects of God: they are the Holy Spirit, Truth, the Good Mind, the Kingdom, Right-Mindedness, Wholeness and Immortality. Collectively they would later be known as the Bounteous Immortals.

Ahura Mazdah, however, stands above and beyond them in the *Gathas*: he is their 'father' and their creator. By 'father' Zoroaster did not understand anything physical (since his God was pure spirit) but simply the origin of all things. Ahura Mazdah creates Truth, for instance, by his will or wisdom and he maintains it by the Good Mind. So too at the beginning of existence Ahura Mazdah *thinks*: 'Let the wide space be filled with lights', and it is so. And it is 'by his mind' that he 'fashioned forth corporeal things, consciences and wills', that 'he created bodily life, and deeds and doctrines among which men could freely make their choices'.

Ahura Mazdah is holy: and by 'holiness' the Zoroastrians understood creativity and fruitfulness. He is the creator of all good things, both spiritual and material. He thinks creation into existence and there does not seem to be any pre-existent matter from which he creates: he creates out of nothing. He is omnipotent and 'rules at will'; he is judge and in the last days will judge all men according to their good and evil deeds.

There is one thing, however, that Ahura Mazdah did not create, and that is death. His Holy Spirit is the spirit of life, and death was the work of another spirit, Angra Mainyu or the 'Destructive Spirit', who was later to be called Ahriman (see AHRIMAN). In the *Gathas* this Destructive Spirit is the eternal adversary of God's Holy Spirit but not of God – of Ahura Mazdah – himself. The Holy Spirit is the author of life and holiness, while the Destructive Spirit is the author of death and diminution. And so we read: 'Of these two Spirits he who was of the Lie chose to do the worst things: but the Most Holy Spirit, clothed in rugged heaven, (chose) Truth . . .'

There is, then, an evil spirit beside the life-giving Holy Spirit of God, who brings death and destruction into the world. The evil spirit is not particularly prominent in the *Gathas* but was later to become an independent principle and the antagonist of God himself.

In the later *Avesta* the ancient 'pagan' gods re-appear as helpers of Ahura Mazdah and his role is seriously impoverished. This process can also be discerned in the inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings, in the later of which the old god Mithra and the goddess Anahita appear alongside Ahura Mazdah. Yet Ahura Mazdah remains essentially the creator of heaven and earth and of 'what is excellent on earth'. He is the source of increase and fertility, of good order in general and of the particular 'good order' among men established and assured by the Achaemenids, the royal house of the first Persian Empire (546–330 BC).

Adversary of Evil

With the sack of Persepolis by Alexander the Great in 330 BC, Zoroastrianism, of which Ahura Mazdah was the Supreme God, ceased to have any privileged position; and it was only with the foundation of the second Persian Empire by the Sassanians in 226 AD that Zoroastrianism not only rose out of obscurity, but became the official religion of the Empire. Ahura Mazdah re-emerged as Ohrmazd but, though still the same God, he was yet not quite the same.

In the course of the centuries Ohrmazd (as he was now called) had been identified with the Holy Spirit of the *Gathas*; and this identification caused a quite new picture to appear. The Holy Spirit had been the eternal adversary of the Destructive Spirit (Angra Mainyu, now called Ahriman), but this role now fell to Ohrmazd himself. This meant that God and the Devil were independent powers – the first wholly good and the second wholly evil, the first dwelling in eternal light, the second in eternal darkness.

'Ohrmazd was on high in omniscience and goodness; for infinite time he was ever in the light. That light is the space and place of Ohrmazd . . . omniscience and goodness are his totality . . . Ahriman, slow in knowledge, whose will is to smite, was deep down in the darkness: (he was) and is, yet will not be. The will to smite is his all, and darkness is his place.'

Such was the state of affairs in the beginning, and so it would have remained if Ahriman had left well alone, but seeing 'valour and supremacy superior to his own', he was jealous of it and longed to possess it. He was not strong enough, and so he created other devils to assist him. Ohrmazd in self-defence first created the Bounteous Immortals and other kindly spirits and then the material creation – the sky, water, the earth, plants, cattle and finally man. Strictly speaking Ahriman cannot create material things, he can only destroy or corrupt them. His first attack on Ohrmazd's spiritual creation failed, for Ohrmazd repulsed him by the power of the holy Word. His second attack on the material creation was only too successful, however. 'Like a serpent he darted forward, trampled on as much of the sky as was beneath the earth, and rended it . . . Then he fell upon the waters . . . which are below the earth; and he bored a hole in the middle of the earth and entered it thereby. He fell upon the plants . . . and upon the (primal) Bull and Gayomart (primal man); and he slew them both.' Thus the second battle ended in a complete defeat for Ohrmazd, or so it seemed.

Even so, Ohrmazd's spiritual creation remained untouched; and once Ahriman had entered the sky he found himself imprisoned within it. Moreover, the seed of Gayomart, the primal man, and of the Bull had fallen into the ground; and from there human life and the life of man's friends in the animal creation were to grow up and to carry on the good fight against Ahriman and his demonic hordes. For 3000 years the two spiritual armies are locked in indecisive battle but in the last 3000 years allotted to this world Ohrmazd's victory becomes every day more apparent, until in the last days Ahriman is defeated by a war of attrition; and the whole demonic creation, seeing Ohrmazd's creation elude it, falls upon itself in a suicidal civil war. Finally Ohrmazd smites Ahriman and he is expelled into the eternal darkness in which he will remain forever unconscious, never to rise again: and all Ohrmazd's creation will be reunited with him in the eternal light and in unceasing joy for ever and ever.

(See also DUALISM; PARSEES; ZURVAN.)

R. C. ZAEHNER

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A great source of prestige to the kings of France was their claim to be anointed with oil of divine origin, incorporating the famous oil of Clovis: at the ceremony of consecration its special sanctity would be passed on to the monarch

OIL

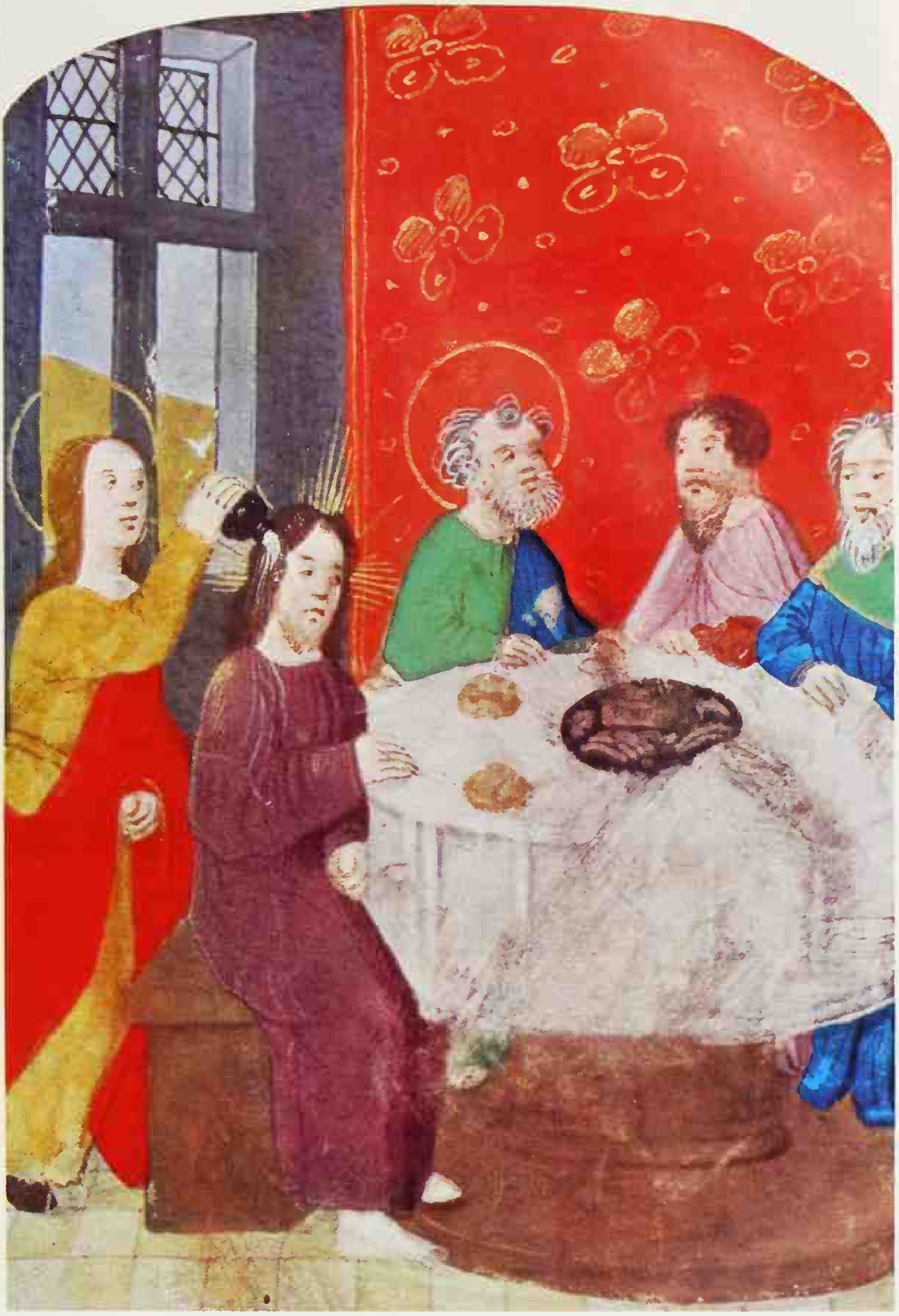
THE SUBSTANCES that have been employed for anointing have been very various: they include vegetable oils, often perfumed and containing gums and balsams, animal fats, blood, saliva, honey and mud. Their use in ritual is both ancient and widespread. They might be employed in the worship of a god, as a means of consecration, for the unction of the sick or the burial of the dead, or to impart special powers. A magical factor is present in all these forms of anointing.

The cosmetic use of oils and unguents in religion was obviously patterned on their employment in secular life as aids to the toilet. The Egyptians, for example, made much use of perfumed ointments as pleasing emollients: the celebrated golden throne found in the tomb of Tutankhamen depicts, on its back panel, the queen anointing the young king; on festal occasions the Egyptians wore cones of perfumed ointment on their heads, which gradually melted in the heat and anointed their bodies. Consequently, in the daily toilet-ritual performed in temples for the pleasure of the gods, their cult images, as representatives of themselves, were solemnly anointed. Similar toilet ceremonies are performed in Hindu temples where the devotees of Shiva anoint the *lingam* symbol of their god. Greek mythology also reveals that the gods were thought to delight in fragrant unguents as mortals did. The goddess Hera, seeking to win the favour of Zeus, carefully prepares herself by bathing in ambrosia and anointing herself with perfumed oil (*Iliad*, book 14).

Pleasing to God

A particularly notable instance of the cosmetic use of oil in the service of a god is recorded in the book of Genesis. The patriarch Jacob, after his marvellous dream at Bethel, 'rose early in the morning, and he took the stone which he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it' (Genesis 28.18). This stone pillar was a cult object, denoting the presence of deity. The sequel to Jacob's act is significant. God announces himself to Jacob in a dream: 'I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me' (Genesis 31.13). God was evidently understood to have appreciated the cultic service rendered to him by the anointing of the pillar.

Ancient Hebrew religion provides some of the best evidence of the use of oil as a means of consecration. Chapter 30 of the book of Exodus gives elaborate directions for the making of holy oil. 'Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much . . . and of aromatic cane two hundred and fifty, and of cassia five hundred . . . and of olive oil a hin; and you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; a holy anointing oil it shall be.' Then follow instructions about anointing sacred objects, the 'tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony' and all their cultic furniture and vessels. The purpose of doing so is clearly stated: 'you shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them will become holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests.'


British Museum

The woman anoints Christ's head with ointment as he sits at supper: 15th century manuscript. Her action was interpreted by Jesus as an anointing preparatory to his burial

The virtue which this anointing imparted to the objects and persons concerned involves an important religious concept. The oil was regarded as being impregnated by a divine power or virtue; and its application to suitable objects or persons had the effect of endowing them with the character of holiness.

The Lord's Anointed

The consecration of Aaron and his sons by holy unction to serve as priests of Yahweh is paralleled in Hebrew records by the anointing of kings. The classic case is that of the consecration of Saul by the prophet Samuel: 'Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said, "Has not the Lord anointed you to be

A lingam, symbol of the god Shiva, is worshipped after being anointed and garlanded with flowers. The ritual of anointing cult images and symbols of the gods was based on the cosmetic use of oils in secular life

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prince over his people Israel?"' (1 Samuel, chapter 10). This sacring conferred on Saul an indelible distinction which was still respected even when he had fallen from divine favour. Thus David, his young rival, refused to take the opportunity of slaying Saul, saying 'who can put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?'

There is evidence of the anointing of kings in ancient Egypt, in Hinduism and among the Aztecs; but it was the Christians, following Jewish precedents, who made anointing an essential part of the coronation ceremony. The French kings claimed to be anointed with oil of divine origin. A legend told how at the baptism of Clovis (c 465–511), the reputed founder of the French monarchy, a crystal phial descended from heaven with the chrism (consecrated oil) for the anointing of the king. Every French king, down to the ill-fated Louis XVI, was anointed at his coronation with chrism that contained a tiny fragment of the solidified oil of Clovis. The claim of the medieval French kings that their regal status was conferred by this divine oil was a source of envy to their English rivals. Eventually English kings were enabled to claim a like prestige. During the reign of Richard II, a phial of oil was miraculously found in the Tower of London. It was identified as one alleged to have been given to St Thomas of Canterbury by the Virgin Mary for the anointing of the kings of England. Before Richard could avail himself of the divine gift, he was deposed. To his supplanter Henry IV the oil was truly a godsend, for his consecration by it endowed him with a prestige that Richard lacked.

The sacring of the monarch remains a crucial part of the English coronation service. A rubric directs: 'on the morning of the Coronation early, care is to be taken that the Ampulla be filled with oil, and together with the spoon, laid ready upon the Altar of the Abbey Church.' The ceremony of anointing is prefaced by a short consecratory prayer, 'to bless and sanctify thy chosen servant who is to be anointed with this oil and consecrated King'. The Archbishop of Canterbury anoints the monarch, in the form of a cross upon the head, breast and hands. A compound oil is used, which is consecrated by a bishop of the chapter of Westminster on the morning of the coronation.

In Catholic Christianity the consecratory aspect of anointing is a feature of its use in baptism, confirmation and the ordination of priests. The chrism that is used is a mixture of olive oil and balsam. It is employed also in the consecration of churches, altars, sacred vessels and baptismal water. In the Roman Catholic Church, chrism is consecrated by bishops on Maundy Thursday; in the Orthodox Church the privilege is reserved to patriarchs only.

It is to be noted, in this connection, that the title 'Christ' comes from the Greek *Christos*, meaning 'the Anointed One', which in turn translated the Hebrew *mashiah* (Messiah). The Hebrew title had become the designation for Yahweh's chosen or 'anointed' representative, who would ultimately effect the salvation and restoration of Israel. Jesus of Nazareth was identified by his followers as the expected Messiah; the title *Christos* was soon added to his personal name, and from it the word 'Christian' derived.

Extreme Unction

The ritual anointing of the sick, known as the Unction of the Sick, is a sacrament of Catholic Christianity. The scriptural authority for the rite is given in the epistle of James, chapter 5. 'Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.' As this passage indicates, and as was the custom in the Early Church and still is in the Greek Church, this Unction was primarily considered as a divinely instituted means to recovery from sickness. In the Roman Catholic Church, however, the rite has come increasingly to be known as Extreme Unction, being administered as a preparation for death to those near their end.

The use of oil and other unguents in burial rites is ancient, and it has been practised by many peoples. Among the Egyptians it figures prominently in the ritual of embalmment (see MUMMIFICATION). The Greeks placed vessels of oil known as *lekythoi* in tombs for the use of the dead, and the Romans poured perfumed oil over the ashes of the dead. The Christian gospels contain two notable passages concerning the mortuary use of oil. Jesus interprets the action of the woman who anointed him at Bethany with the words: 'She has done what she could: she has anointed my body beforehand for burying' (Mark 14.8). And female followers of Jesus bring spices to his sepulchre to anoint his body on Easter morning (Mark 16.1).

Unguents that confer supernatural powers on those anointed with them figure in the folktales of many peoples, particularly in tales connected with witches. One of the earliest examples occurs in the famous *Golden Ass* of Apuleius, written in the 2nd century AD. A colourful narrative relates how the witch Pamphile, by the application of a special ointment, changed herself into an owl and flew away (see also FLYING OINTMENT). Although such instances may be classed as 'black' magic, the religious use of holy oils and other unguents equally involved the principle of contagious magic – that supernatural power or grace can be obtained by contact with a substance that is charged with it.

S. G. F. BRANDON

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OLD AGE & WITCHCRAFT

Behind the figure of the witch as a bent old hag is the landscape of the society that created her; mental illness among lonely old women was construed as witchcraft by the people of their time, partly to satisfy psychological needs of their own.

ALL GENERALIZATIONS are subject to exception, but Reginald Scot's verbal cartoon of the 16th century English witch as 'lame, blear-eyed, pale, foul and full of wrinkles' seems to have had wide European currency. In his examination of Spanish witchcraft materials, J.-C. Baroja noted that the Evil Eye was more particularly found in elderly spinsters. Perpetuated by German and Scandinavian folklorists, the stereotype of the witch as a malign old woman has found contemporary reaffirmation in Disney films.

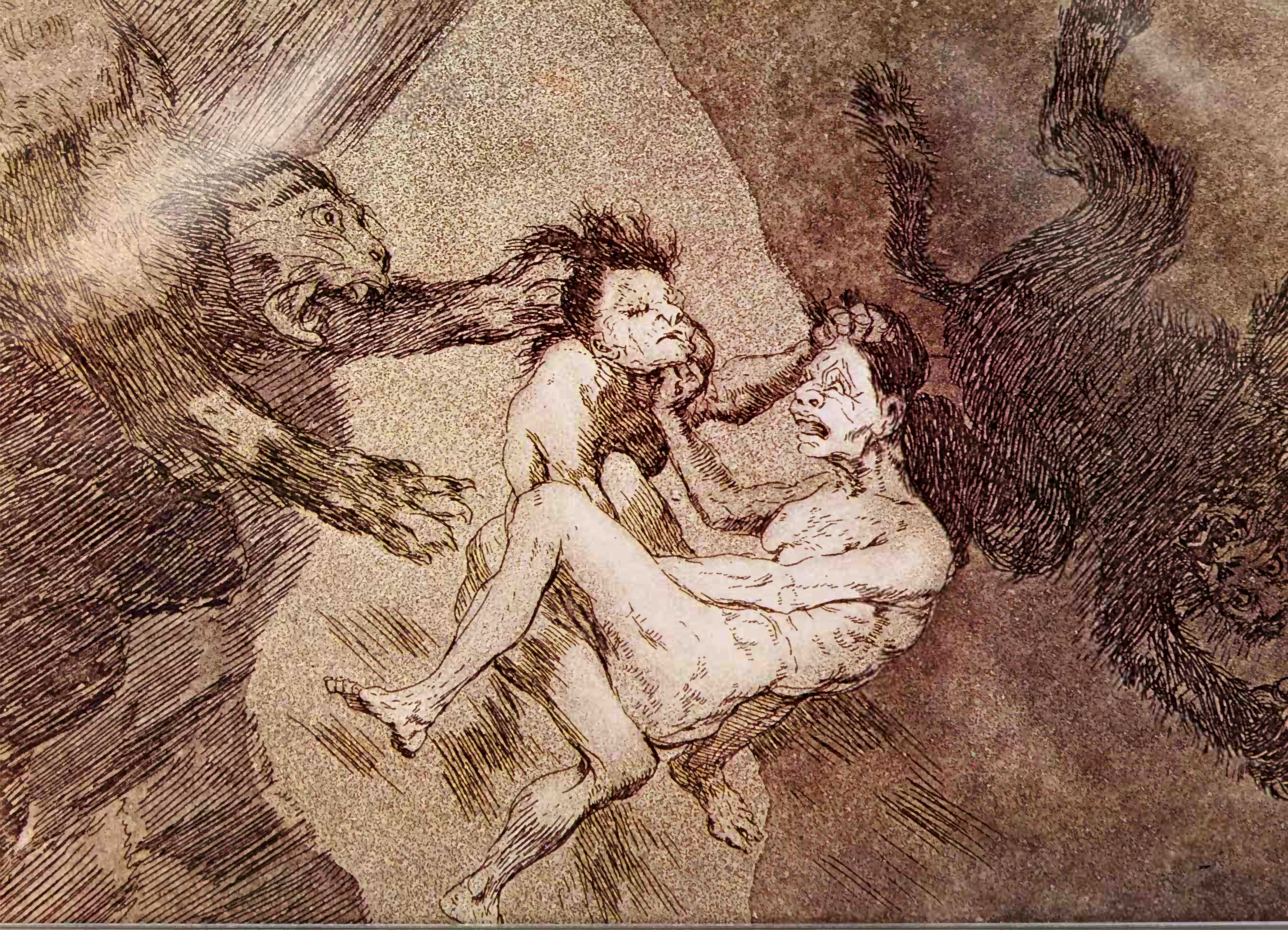
But the bent old hag, whilst she may indeed have typified the European witch, is not a universal symbol. Anthropologists would admit that those arraigned for witchcraft in Africa, although they are usually women, are by no means typically elderly. In fact in most African communities the old are revered rather than rejected. If one accepts the idea of the witch as a special personality, it would be logical in terms of modern sociological theory to interpret her as a function of the society or culture that produced her. With this concept in mind, the differences between African and European witchcraft beliefs may be instructive.

African society is organized around the 'extended family', which consists of several generations and a number of kinsfolk living together. In the extended family, which tends to be found in rural and agricultural communities, the position of each member is defined with some clarity and the elderly retain both status and respect. Contrasted with this type of family organization is that typical of the Western world, the nuclear family, which consists of mother, father and their children. Members of the older generation tend to be found both intrusive and disruptive in the nuclear family, and for these reasons often to be excluded.

Since even in modern Europe examples of the extended family still survive, it is not

An old woman is examined by a monk for the 'witch's mark', sign of her allegiance to the Devil: scene from *Witchcraft Through the Ages*

National Film Archive



Etching by Goya of two naked hags locked in combat: the woman no longer young has become a symbol of horror and depravity

an unreasonable supposition that earlier European society very closely resembled the social organization found today in Africa and Asia. Furthermore, one might suggest that in the evolution of the European nuclear family from its original form as an extended family, outbreaks of witchcraft accusation could be expected to coincide to a large extent with those periods of social change when elderly women in particular had become a burden that the emerging social structure was unable to support.

Since Europe at the end of the Middle Ages lacked adequate welfare mechanisms to cope with the widespread plight of the aged, it looks as though unconscious forces first isolated the old and then destroyed them by fire for witchcraft. Later generations were to use the gas chamber with a different set of rationalizations.

One of the problems encountered in the study of medieval European witchcraft is that the research worker has to rely on people living centuries ago to supply him with materials. And of course these people perceived their world in ways often very different from ourselves. There is always the danger therefore, in reinterpreting observations made in past centuries, that one may lose valuable significances. Nevertheless, as one examines the bizarre evidence of the witchcraft trials, one is struck by the psychotic flavour, not only of many of the accusations but of the confessions. One wonders to what extent many of those found guilty of witchcraft were, in fact, elderly people whose minds had degenerated into some form of schizophrenia. Edmund Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* noted – and misunderstood – the typical schizoid withdrawal of the witch:

> So choosing solitary to abide
> Far from all neighbours, that her devilish deeds
> And hellish arts from people she might hide,
> And hurt far off, unknown, whom she envied.

While one must be careful to discount many of the confessions, which were extracted under the most callous torture, there nevertheless remains a catalogue of delusion that calls for re-examination. The stress on sexuality, the claim to be directed by voices and the alleged ability, after stripping, to be able to fly, all provide a pattern which modern research may help us to interpret.

As a recent Anglo-Scandinavian study was able to demonstrate, many of the characteristics of the witch can also be identified in the schizophrenia of old age. It is interesting to notice that of the sample studied, more than half were unmarried women and over 40 per cent were living alone. Almost without exception these were women who until comparatively recently had regular employment and who, now in retirement, had been reduced to straitened circumstances. Modern studies of the mental condition of some of the aged not only confirm the findings of this particular research project but closely resemble surviving accounts of witch behaviour. Discussing the onset of paraphrenia (a type of schizophrenia found in the aged) the authors comment: 'The first signs are manifested in an increasing quarrelsomeness or unprovoked abuse of those living near. Oddities in speech appearance or other aspects of behaviour are noticed. The patient may seclude himself, refuse callers, break off contact with tradesmen, and wander outside or move about the house at night, talking, laughing or crying out.' Modern society considers such people need medical attention rather than the stake, but one hesitates to think what the 17th-century Witch-Finder General, Matthew Hopkins, would have decided. And it is by no means unheard of in medical case histories to find elderly women complaining that men who have hitherto shown not the least interest in them have sexually molested them – an allegation not without parallel in the strange erotica of European witchcraft.

The Role of the Outcast

The danger of so much anthropological analysis is that it merely permits the substitution of one system of labelling for another. Undoubtedly many witches were insane. But if the value of modern research lies in the insight that it may give into historical events, so too the value of past events such as the massive witch hunts of the 16th and 17th centuries, lies in the light they can shed on our contemporary life. The fact that old people today are committed to hospital, rather than burnt, does not really remove the underlying social pressures which continue to produce aged outcasts.

It is generally accepted by psychiatrists that an emotionally disturbed person is to some extent satisfying the unconscious needs of the immediate family or its equivalent. In fact, the family is itself in part responsible for unconsciously demanding and unconsciously rewarding the sort of behaviour now labelled as psychotic. And this implies that the family, although it is not consciously aware of the fact, has an emotional investment in the abnormal behaviour which, if maintained, must militate against the patient's recovery. In this interpretation of insanity, as to some extent an expression of the needs of others, lies the reason why many modern psychiatrists like to include the whole family in the therapeutic strategy.

While this particular theory does not exclude hereditary factors, it does assert that the particular form (and possibly the depth and duration) in which insanity will manifest itself is determined by social conditions. Scattered studies of schizophrenia in Africa, and particularly of *ukuthwasa*, or witch-doctor's disease, support these contentions. Ukuthwasa is a type of schizoid condition regarded as an essential characteristic of a would-be witch-doctor, which, because of differences in social attitude, has usually quite a different course and outcome from that of schizophrenia in a white European community.

The problem under consideration is the extent to which witchcraft can be seen as a role that satisfied unconscious group expectations – just as contemporary expressions of insanity may be seen as responses to unconscious group needs.

The extraordinarily complex interaction of the individual with those with whom he is associated helps us to see abnormal behaviour as at least partially determined socially. Hollingshead and Redlich, examining the social origins of psychotics, found that most schizophrenics came from families who were semi-skilled, partially educated people, suspicious, individualistic, self-centred and hostile to formal education. These are traits that lead to further isolation and discrimination. 'Such people in our society,' Hollingshead comments 'tend to be dropped by their families as injured limbs are cast off by some organisms.'

The gradual reduction in sharpness of sight and hearing in old age may well have the effect of further emphasizing an isolation already partly produced by social forces. Changes in behaviour due to a reduction of communication are likely to follow. Modern studies of conditions of sensory deprivation show that strange and sometimes irreversible changes can be induced in the personalities of people subject to solitary confinement.

Naked to the Sabbath

Artificially created sensory deprivation has been used as one of the main techniques in 'brainwashing' political prisoners, and similar experiences have been noted in people exploring the polar regions or lost in great deserts. Admiral Richard Byrd, for example, isolated in Antarctica for several months, noticed that after the twelfth week he was in a state of deep depression, which was succeeded by a loss of identity during which he felt that he was floating like a disembodied spirit; this would have been evidence enough to convince the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, that they had another case of witchcraft on their hands. Christine Ritter subjected herself to periods of up to 16 days of isolation in the polar wastes and recorded an almost overwhelming desire to run naked into the snow. If this calls to mind witchcraft evidence concerning women who stripped and went naked to some sabbath, the monsters which the hallucinated Christine Ritter saw seem to rival the bestiary of witch annals.

Alone, socially rejected, with failing sight and hearing, the medieval old woman must have suffered to a pitiful degree. If in addition her faculties were frequently weakened by hunger and cold, it is no small wonder that she responded to rejection with bemused and antisocial reactions.

The study of witchcraft raises far more than an image of a bumbling old hag; for behind her is the society that created her. Eventually one is left wondering who are the more pitiful, those condemned for witchcraft or those who accuse of witchcraft. After considering the monstrous legal and religious armoury of the Middle Ages piled up against the frail, short-sighted old woman, one is inclined to wonder how much of our modern legislation will not come to be regarded as a monument to our own less reputable desires.

BRIAN W. ROSE

Surviving rigorous persecution, first under the Tsars and subsequently under the Soviet Communist regime, the Old Believers preserved the time-honoured traditions of the ancient Russian church

OLD BELIEVERS

THE ORIGINAL OLD BELIEVERS (or Old Ritualists) came into being as a result of the Great Schism in Russia in the 17th century. Patriarch Nikon wanted to introduce into the Orthodox Church, the established Church of the country, certain ritual and liturgical reforms on a Greek model. He was resisted by the compelling personality and total commitment to the traditional faith of Archpriest Avvakum (1620–82), who suspected the Church at Constantinople of being, among other things, tainted by Western influence.

Avvakum had been one of the leading figures in a vigorous reforming movement in Russia, which had raised standards among the priesthood, setting its face against laxity and drunkenness, and insisting on the strict observation of fasts, the reverent conduct of the services and frequent preaching. He himself carried piety and self-discipline to the degree of reciting 600 prayers to Jesus and 100 to the Virgin Mary every evening, while prostrating himself with his brow to the floor and rising again no less than 300 times. His wife, when pregnant, was let off with 400 prayers and 200 prostrations.

In the 1650s, however, the reformers fell out with Nikon, the newly appointed Patriarch, a devoted and fiercely intolerant admirer of all things Greek. Among other things, he insisted that the sign of the cross, which the Russian Orthodox devout, by long-hallowed tradition, made using two fingers, must be made with three fingers in the Greek manner. The issue might seem trivial on the surface, but it brought the whole conflict between the Patriarch and those who were determined to preserve the old accustomed Russian ways to a head. Avvakum, who refused to give way, was imprisoned for 22 years and was finally burned to death at the stake.

To this day, Avvakum is revered by the Old Believers as a saint and by historians as one of the greatest writers of old Russia. He lost his cause, but carried with him a very large number of people. They eventually divided into two main streams: those having priests, the *Popovtsy*, and those without them, the *Bespopovtsy*.

As with the Roman Catholic Church at the Reformation, once the great religious monolith of the Russian Orthodox Church had been shattered there seemed to be a compulsion to splinter further. The personality of a local leader or the geographical location of a community was often a decisive enough factor to produce a new subdivision. The 'priestless' communities were naturally more inclined to fragment than those which retained or regained a hierarchical system, and one Soviet researcher, F.I. Fedorenko, has listed no less than 46 'denominations' among the Bespopovtsy.

Avvakum was not himself a fanatic, but his uncompromising stand easily inspired fanaticism in others. It led millions into exile; many who did not die at the hands of Tsarist oppressors believed they could keep the purity of the old faith and ritual by taking premature leave of the corruptions of this world, and died together under the compulsion of a mass hysteria (as at the end of Mussorgsky's opera *Khovanshchina*).

Both main streams subsequently abjured fanaticism. In thousands of towns and villages of the Soviet Union, the Old Believers were respected for their peaceable disposition and their positive contributions to local life. The more extreme elements, which survived into recent times, should not properly be classified as Old Believers at all (see SKOPTSY). Despite their long history of suffering, the atheistic Soviet State did not spare the Old Believers any more than other religious bodies. However, those who had been hardened by long experience of Tsarist persecution did not find it as difficult as some others to endure continued persecution from the Communist authorities.

Russia's 'Lost Tribes'

In this, geography has been their friend. An initial desire to flee from population centres, simply in order to avoid the attentions of Tsarist officials, was soon replaced by a positive compulsion to seek the 'land of white water' which they believed was situated somewhere in the East. Starting from the populous areas of European Russia, the Old Believers found plenty of space for their wanderings. They not only tamed the land. They found themselves havens which lay undisturbed for centuries.

Walter Kolarz, in his book *Religion in the Soviet Union*, has told the impressive story of the discovery of a 'lost tribe' of Old Believers which was found by a Soviet expedition to the Bukhtarma valley in northeast Kazakhstan in 1927. Another group was located in 1931 on the Sino-Soviet border, 250 miles from the nearest railway and in the middle of a tiger-infested jungle.

A more recent journey of discovery to a 'lost' community, whose traditional way of life is still intact, has also been recorded. In the summer of 1965 an expedition was sponsored jointly by the Soviet atheist monthly, *Science and Religion*, and the Institute of Scientific Atheism. It was to seek out 'priestless' Old Believer communities on the right bank of the River Ob, miles out in the taiga (an area of marsh and coniferous forest) north of Tomsk. One of its members, A. Shamaro, kept a diary, from which the following extracts are taken.

'The cell of a *Pustynnik* (member of the "hermit" sect) in the taiga is a simple, old-fashioned Russian hut, dark, cramped, low and roofed with birch-bark or branches used like slates. It usually stands on the edge of a clearing in the forest which has been converted into a kitchen garden. Outhouses and awnings lean against the hut.

'They build the cells with their front windows aligned accurately towards the east – or more precisely, towards the "east of the Annunciation". This is the name given by the Old Believers of these parts to that point on the horizon where the sun rises on the Festival of the Annunciation – 25 March, old style. The hermit has his chapel in the front corner of the hut – each one is both church and dwelling, just as each hermit is both priest and congregation. This applies all the more if he lives alone.

'The icons are hung behind curtains, the blackened faces of their figures being painted in the "pre-Nikon" style and with copper reproductions of those images which are especially esteemed among the Old Believers. In front of the iconostasis (screen on which icons are placed) there is a shelf with thick volumes on it – service books, sermons and prayer manuals. These books are so bulky and old that thick embroidered cushions are placed under the cover for support when they are opened for reading, so that the binding does not disintegrate. Larger cushions hang on the wall by the iconostasis. They are called "arm-cushions" and the hermits put them under their elbows, so that their old bones are not overstrained by their countless prostrations...

'The hermits call themselves *Prostetsy* – that is, monks who are not priests. Though they have no clergy, all their days and nights are tightly packed with services. The day of worship begins in the second or third hour after midnight with a vigil... This is followed by matins, "the first hour", "the hours" (the hermits' mass), vespers and compline. Then follows the vigil again. In addition, they recite offices "for the repose of souls". There can be up to ten services in a period of twenty-four hours. On the great church festivals, of course, there is even more worship. Those clocks which work are set to "Jerusalem time" – six hours out from local time.'

Postwar Revival

After World War II, if there was any popular notion at all of what the Old Believers in Russia represented, they were probably seen as an effete, fanatical sect, no longer of any importance in the religious life of the Soviet Union. This view was largely based on the impression which tourists gained from visits to the picturesque Old Believer churches in the outskirts of Moscow, where the congregation consisted largely of old women practising their antique rituals. Nevertheless, there were still places where all the old traditions were preserved in their purity, and active communities with a proportion of young people in the membership.

This was true outside the Soviet Union, as well: for example, in the flourishing Old Believer communities settled at Erie in Pennsylvania and elsewhere in the United States. Furthermore, some of the Moscow Old Believers joined the religious wing of the mounting pressure group for the establishment of human rights in their country. It was clear that the Old Believers in Russia were far from moribund.

Even during the height of Stalin's purges, there were Old Believers who had the temerity to try and avail themselves of their legal right (categorically established in 1929) to petition for the opening of a church when there were 20 believers of the same faith in the same place who desired it. Fifty of them were arrested in 1937 at Tiraspol as

A Moscow church of the Old Believers, who keep to the original forms of worship practised by the Orthodox Church before the Great Schism of the 17th century

Novosti Press Agency

'counter-revolutionaries' merely for making such a request. During this period, the vast majority of places of worship in accessible areas were forcibly closed; the Old Believers were affected, in common with all other religious faiths.

However, with the general relaxation of attitude by the State towards religion during World War II, there occurred what present-day Soviet researchers term a 'reactivation' of the Old Believer faith. As the author of an authoritative Soviet book on the subject, V.F. Milovidov, puts it: 'In many areas of the country communities of Old Believers were reborn which, it seemed, had once and for all disintegrated and discontinued their existence; large numbers of petitions were received from Old Believers requesting the opening of churches and prayer-houses.'

There have never been any accurate statistics on the Old Believers, but it was quite commonly stated by Soviet commentators today that there were not less than 20 million of them by 1917. They always hastened to add that this number had subsequently fallen to not more than one million at most, but this at best, with 'lost' communities still coming to light, could have been no more than a guess; at worst, it was a figure devised for purely propagandistic purposes. It is not only the nationwide renewal of the movement after World War II which makes this figure suspect. Whole new communities in Poland and Latvia were enveloped by the pushing westward of Soviet frontiers just before and towards the end of the war – and these were more active and better organized than their counterparts who had endured the purges.

In addition, the central organizations of the chief denominations of the Old Believers became active again and were more successful than the Russian Orthodox Church in securing permission to hold representative assemblies. One group, the Church of the Belo-Krinitsa Concord, was able to appoint three new bishops and 50 new priests and deacons in six years from 1942.

Reliable statistics on the number of young people active among the Old Believer communities are naturally even more difficult to come by than figures for the nationwide membership of the movement. Yevgeny Bobkov was a brilliant law student at Moscow University, but also carried the standards in processions at an Old Believer church in the city. For this he was expelled from the university in 1959. If this could happen in the capital, it could occur much more easily in the provinces – and later anti-religious propaganda suggested that this was very far from being a unique instance.

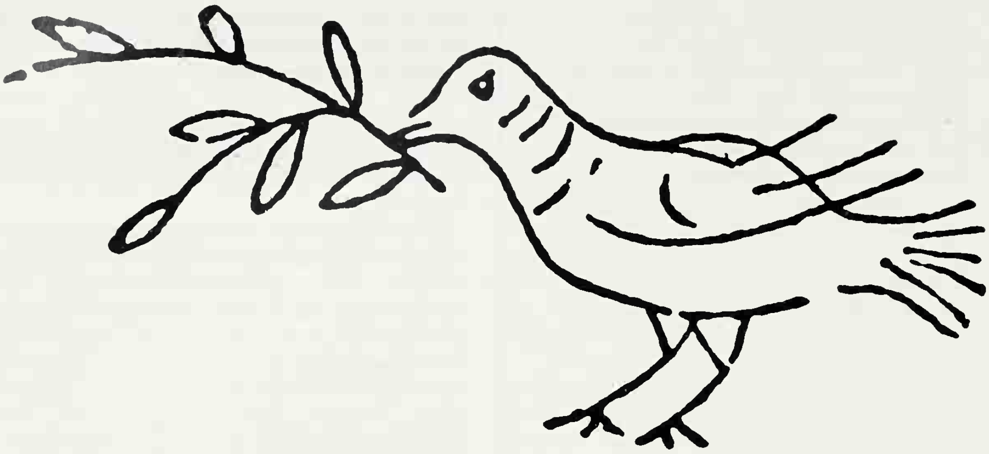
At the beginning of 1969 there occurred something totally unexpected. A short document reached the West, claiming to represent the 'voice of the Old Believers from the U.S.S.R.' From its wealth of hard fact it appeared genuine. It complained, for example, of serious state interference in the internal life of the Church, which was against the law:

> The secret police have penetrated into the very heart of the Archiepiscopate... and put into it their own important agent, Protodeacon Georgy Alexandrovich Ustinov, as secretary... All incoming and outgoing mail passes through his hands: correspondence with the parishes, priests and believers, petitions, complaints of believers about persecution by the local Soviet authorities, and so on, and the answers of the Archbishop and his officials – all this immediately becomes known to the secret police.

With this appeal for justice, the Old Believers joined those Baptists, Orthodox and Catholics who petitioned the Soviet authorities during the 1960s to allow them their basic human rights, and whose pressure helped to bring about the change of attitude 20 years later under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev. In 1985 the total of Old Believers in the Soviet Union was put at close on 3 million, although statistics of this kind have to be treated with caution. The breakdown of the Soviet system at the end of the 1980s gave an impetus to a powerful religious revival, which may stand the Old Believers in good stead in the long run.

MICHAEL BOURDEAUX*

FURTHER READING: Michael Bourdeaux, *Opium of the People* (Bobbs, Merrill, 1966); Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (St. Martin's Press, 1962).



As an emblem of peace and reconciliation, the olive was adopted as a Christian symbol: early Christian sign of a bird with an olive branch in its beak, from a Roman catacomb

Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

OLIVE

THE TREES once went forth to anoint a king over them; and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us.' But the olive tree said to them, 'Shall I leave my fatness, by which gods and men are honoured . . . ?' The innumerable references to olive and olive oil in the Bible testify both to the importance of the olive and its oil as food and to the great symbolic significance of anointment with the oil, both factors which appear in this quotation (from Judges, chapter 9).

Exactly when and where the olive was first cultivated is a mystery, but it seems probable that it was known to the ancient Egyptians. It is the tree most closely associated with the development of civilization, and its importance today throughout Mediterranean lands is unabated.

The first Bible reference to the olive is in Genesis, in the story of the Flood. To find whether the waters had subsided, Noah released a dove from the ark: 'And the dove came back to him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth a freshly plucked olive leaf' (Genesis 8.11). So well known was the olive even in those distant times that the single leaf sufficed for identification, showing that it was safe to come out of the ship. Ever since, the tree and the bird have both symbolized peace and friendship. The olive also represents prosperity, beauty, strength and divine blessings.

The garden of Gethsemane was an olive grove. Whether the few trees in it today date from the time of Christ cannot be ascertained, but it is certainly possible, for the olive is among the longest lived of trees. Its trunk may decay within but the outer shell continues to thrive; and even if the top is entirely cut down or burnt away the root will sprout again. When a garden is mentioned in the Bible or in old travellers' tales, an olive orchard is usually meant.

Gift of Athene

In Greek legend Athene (Minerva to the Romans and Etruscans) was responsible for having made the olive bear fruit. Virgil referred to her as *Oleae inventrix*. When she and Poseidon were disputing for the possession of Attica, Poseidon caused a salt-water spring to gush from the rock of the Acropolis on striking it with his trident (another legend suggests that he created a horse). Athene, however, caused an olive tree to appear, and this was considered by the gods to be the more valuable gift. So the city of Athens got its name, and the Athenians adopted Athene as their particular goddess. An olive branch is portrayed on early Attic coins. Goats were the special sacrifice to Athene because of the harm they did to olives (as to most vegetation).

The olive on the Acropolis was burnt by Xerxes when he sacked Athens in 480 BC but it reappeared as if by magic. There is still an olive on the Acropolis. Herodotus tells how Xerxes, before his Greek expedition, dreamt that he was crowned with an olive wreath which instantly vanished, and indeed his was a hollow victory. The Athenians revered the sacred olive and severely punished anyone who damaged it. Olive was used for victors' crowns at the Olympic Games, and was equal to the laurel in importance.

Olive was also one of the symbols of the Greek harvest festival, represented in more recent times by a symbolic tree branch known as the Harvest-May. The *eiresione*, a branch of olive or laurel decorated with fruits of the earth and bedecked with ribbons, was carried in procession and finally fixed over the farm door. Here it was left for a year, guaranteeing the successful growth of further crops. The Yule-log, symbolic winter sacrifice for fruitfulness, was sometimes of olive.

Medieval Christians had many legends about the olive. One of the basic – if very variable – ones was that when Adam died the angel guarding the garden of Eden – the first orchard – gave Seth a seed each of olive, cedar and cypress. These were placed in Adam's mouth and eventually sprouted from his grave, forming a single triple-trunked tree. It was from this tree that Noah's dove plucked the symbolic leaf, beneath this tree that David wept, and it was this tree that Solomon cut down. Too hard to be formed into timber, it was used as a bridge on which the Queen of Sheba crossed a bog. Eventually it formed the basis of the cross. A comparable, simpler legend suggests that the cross was formed from four separate trees – olive, palm, cedar and cypress.

In its capacity as emblem of peace and reconciliation, olive is shown on martyrs' tombs; it was thought to be carried by the angel Gabriel and certain saints, and was in some quarters regarded as the symbol of the Virgin Mary.

In medieval and later centuries olive was regarded as a safeguard against lightning, witchcraft and evil in general; a branch in the house was insurance against such disaster. To dream of olives was lucky, though to dream of plucking the fruit meant trouble. In the language of flowers the olive, naturally enough, represented peace.

A. J. HUXLEY

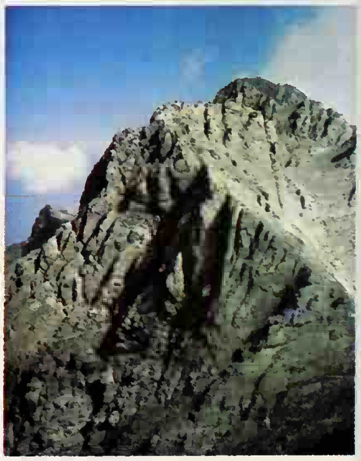
Olympic Games

Athletic contests in honour of Olympian Zeus, founded in 776 BC and held every four years at Olympia, the principal sanctuary of the god in Greece; the games were abolished in the 4th century AD and re-founded in the 19th century; the first in the modern series of games was held at Athens in 1896. See GAMES.

National Film Archive

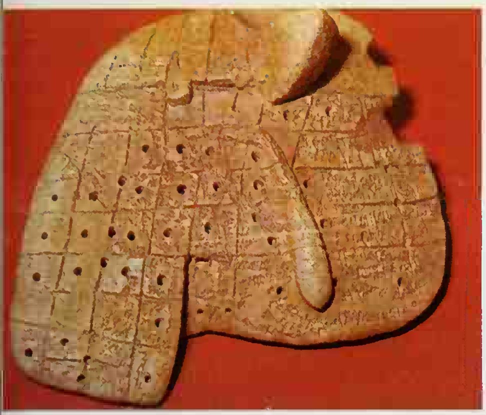
Olympus

Mountain on the borders of Thessaly and Macedonia, close to 10,000 feet in height, the highest peak in the Greek peninsula and the home of the Greek gods; also the name of several other mountains in Greece and Asia Minor.



When William the Conqueror first trod on English soil, he stumbled: minor accidents like this were not thought of as meaningless coincidences but often as important indications of the shape of things to come

OMENS



C. M. Dixon

In the ancient world, the examination of an animal's liver was a way of taking omens; not only the shape and condition of the liver but also its veins and colourings were believed significant: clay model of a sheep's liver divided into 55 zones, from Babylon, dated between the 19th–16th centuries BC

'WE SUFFER as much from trifling incidents as from real evils,' wrote the famous 18th century essayist Joseph Addison. 'I have known the shooting of a star spoil a night's rest . . . A screech owl at midnight has alarmed a family more than a band of robbers; nay, the voice of a cricket has struck more terror than the roar of a lion. There is nothing so inconsiderable which may not appear dreadful to an imagination that is filled with omens.'

That coming events cast their shadows before them is a deeply entrenched belief and an omen has been defined as 'some phenomenon or unusual event taken as a prognostication either of good or evil.' The rigorously fatalistic view that the future is determined in advance and cannot change has rarely been fully accepted in practice. Men have taken omens not so much as pointers to a predetermined future but as warnings of dangers to be avoided or as signals of opportunities to be seized.

When the world of Nature is seen as an orderly system with a definite rhythmic pattern, any variation or disturbance of the established pattern tends to cause anxiety and to be interpreted as a sign of trouble ahead. The sky, the scene of the orderly and regular procession of the stars, has been a fruitful source of omens of what is to come. The meteor, the eclipse and the comet have perhaps created the greatest dread of all, the appearance of a comet being taken as a portent of the coming of the end of the world. Even in 19th century England, as Robert Hunt points out in his *Popular Romances of the West of England*, the lowering of tempest clouds could arouse great alarm among country folk. There is a surviving folk tradition in the British Isles that a mighty storm usually heralds the death of a king. Known as 'the Royal Storm', it paradoxically burst upon Republican England on the night when Oliver Cromwell died.

In the Bible, Noah sees in the rainbow a sign that there will be no more flood, and God says: 'I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth' (Genesis 9.13). In the book of Isaiah we read: 'Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.' In the Middle Ages considerable disturbance was created not infrequently by signs and portents which were taken to show that the Last Judgement was imminent.

It was this sense of apprehension, of impending disaster, which gave the word ominous its present meaning as a sign of future evil. In the realm of Nature this sombre aspect predominates, a flower or plant blooming out of season portending trouble, or death.

Signs from the Animals

Among wild life, birds especially have been considered to have significance as omens (see BIRDS). The cuckoo, as the embodiment of spring, indicated by its call what the future held. If the first call heard came from the right, the omen was good; if from the left, disaster was at hand. Birds have always been regarded as messengers of the gods, the agents of communication between Fate and ourselves.

Like the birds, wild and domestic animals have made an immense contribution to omen lore, partly arising from the old belief that animals could be ancestral spirits animated by the desire to protect their descendants. Among communities as far apart as Africa and Lapland it is unlucky for a hare to cross one's path. The ill-repute of the hare (see HARE) in the British Isles is derived from the tradition that this animal was one of the forms that was assumed by the shape-shifting witch.

Both the dog and the cat figure very largely in the folklore omens of Northern Europe. Among schoolchildren the appearance of a spotted dog is a portent of good luck, while three white dogs provide an even happier omen. It is also extremely fortunate if a strange dog should follow you home and fawn on you. In China dog omens were drawn from the animal's physical characteristics and an official who happened to breed a white puppy with tiger stripes could look forward to speedy promotion. For a cat to cross one's path is a token of good luck but only if it proceeds from the right hand side; an approach from the left can have the most sinister implications. It is also lucky if a strange cat enters the house of its own accord.

Modern animal omens rarely relate to horses, now that the horse plays a lesser role in the social economy. A host of other animal omens have survived, however, representing an old but far from extinct mode of thought. A swarm of bees, the traditional bearers of the goodwill of the gods, which alights in one's garden portends prosperity. For a ship at sea to be followed by a shark continues to have the most ominous implications for sailors.

Messages from Home

Within the self-created environment of man's home a special class of omens exists. The accidental falling of a picture or breaking of a mirror are ominous occurrences. In Devonshire it is still believed that if a rasher of bacon begins to curl up while frying, a new lover is on his way. It is a widespread belief that to discover nine perfect peas in a pod promises a fruitful marriage. The hearth, once the shrine of the domestic god, remains the centre of a whole class of omens, one of the best known of which is that a spluttering coal indicates a forthcoming quarrel. Some country folk hold any change in the rhythm of a clock to be a sign of death because it symbolizes a corresponding disturbance in the rhythm of the life cycle.

The human body itself involuntarily provides omens, in the form of shivering, sneezing, tingling, itching and stumbling. Because of its association with the sensation of fear a shiver running down the spine is immediately interpreted as a sign that 'someone is walking over my grave'. Sneezing was once supposed to indicate that the soul (which was equated with the breath) had been violently ejected from the body, hence the polite salutation of everyone in the vicinity of the sneeze, 'God bless you' (see also SNEEZING).

Itching and tingling are happy or unhappy auspices, dependent upon whether they are experienced on the right side of the body or the left. If the itching is felt in the sole of the foot, it means that you will soon tread on strange ground. The most common of all bodily omens, however, is provided by stumbling. To totter, to take a wrong step, or to fall indicates unhappy prospects for the project in hand and this is reinforced by the proverb: 'He who hesitates is lost'. William the Conquerer is said to have tripped and fallen on landing on English soil, causing consternation among his followers.

An ominous interpretation can be put upon the chance encounter with certain ill-favoured individuals. If your first experience of the day is to come upon a man or woman whose eyebrows are drawn together, meeting across the nose, it portends some misfortune. In the past it would have meant that you had passed close to a vampire or a werewolf. Cross-eyed people are still regarded with apprehension by gamblers and schoolboys for the now forgotten reason that those so afflicted were once supposed to be cursed with the power of the Evil Eye.

Mankind has always been unnerved by any disturbance of the normal pattern of sexual relations which, to the superstitious mind, represents unknown dangers. The great crises of life from birth to death are occasions when omens are looked for and discovered in the world about us. If a child is born with the incoming tide the omen is good, but if at the ebb tide the portent is bad. In a recent article in the magazine *Prediction* it was said that some astrologers ascribe deformities in babies to eclipses taking place at conception. To the housewife it is ominous if her wedding ring is accidentally broken, for this foreshadows the destruction of her marriage.

In sickness it is a sign of forthcoming

sorrow if a bird of dark plumage settles upon the roof. Certain psychic manifestations belong to the category of death omens, as for example the banshee, the Jack o'Lantern and the phantom coach. The fetch, or psychic double of a person who is shortly to die, which manifests itself to someone near and dear to him, comes within the category of the omen since it represents a forewarning of death (see DOUBLE). Among those who are unknowingly near to death there is sometimes an unconscious awareness of their condition. They make their wills, settle their affairs, and make preparations for the end. As Jung pointed out: 'Dying has its onset long before actual death.' Premonitions of death in the elderly are as much justifiable states of mind as they are omens. This kind of omen has an affinity with the prophetic powers that are so often associated with the dying.

The anxiety which mankind seems destined to suffer when contemplating the future was responsible for the system of omen interpretation known as augury (see AUGURY). In ancient Rome a college of priestly augurs interpreted the indications of approval or disapproval signified by the gods in relation to coming events. These signs might take the form of the flashing of lightning or the flight of birds. The augur stood facing south, with the east or lucky quarter, associated with the sun's rising, to his left and with the unlucky west to his right, and attempted t determine the meaning of the phenomeno from its angle of approach.

The augur did no more than stage situation within which the laws of chanc could operate freely, leaving the sign itse to be presented spontaneously by Nature. I an extreme example of this class of divination, called alectromancy, a circle representing the letters of the alphabet wa prepared and upon each of the letters a grai of wheat was placed. A cockerel representing the non-human agency was introduce and began to eat the grains. The letter corresponding to the grains thus eaten wer built into a word which supplied answers t the questions asked.

More directly associated with the natura

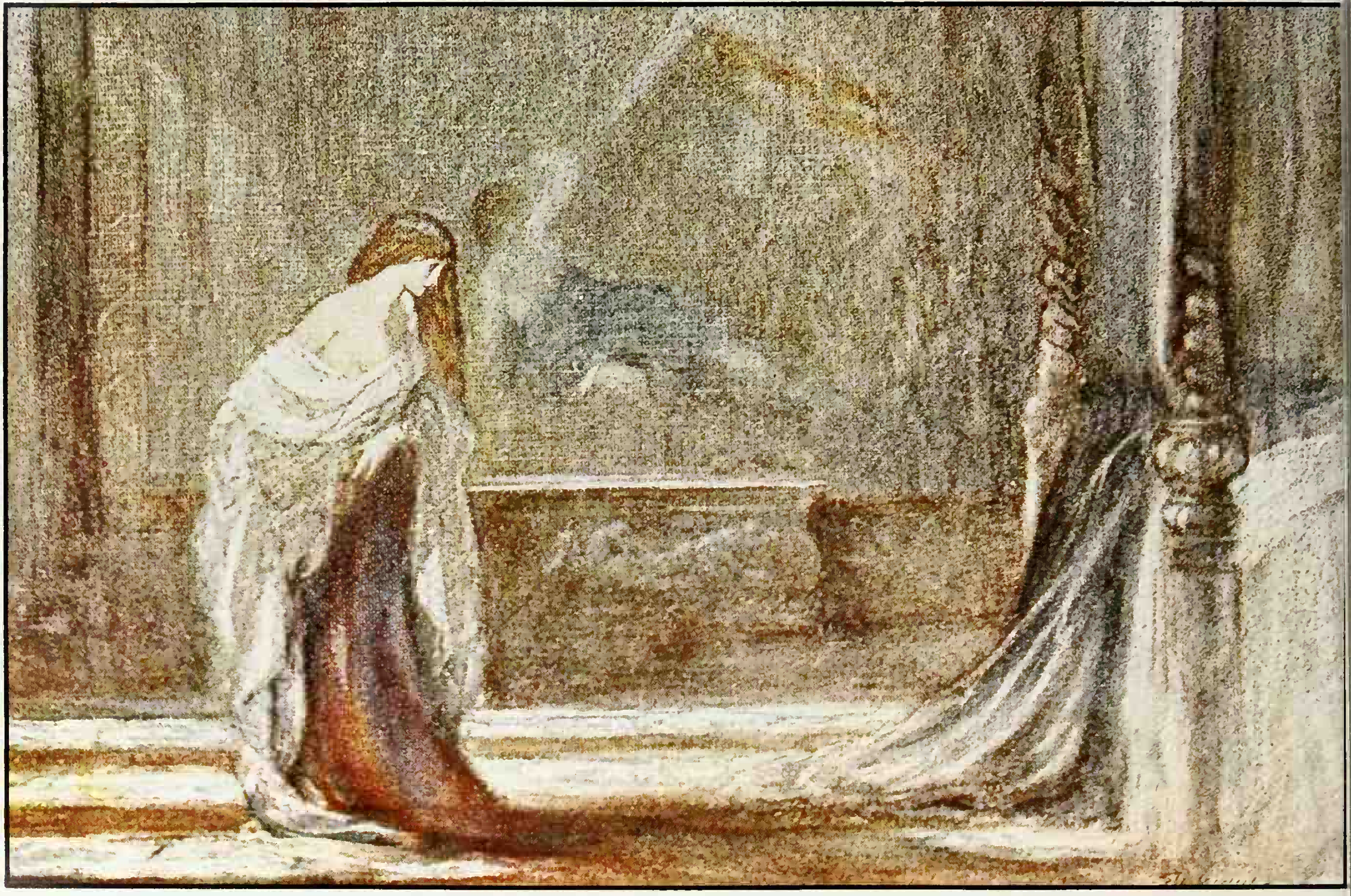


Illustration from John Keat's poem *The Eve of St Agnes* part of which is quoted below

They told her how, upon St Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline:
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by – she heeded not at all: in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retired; not cool'd by high disdain,
But she saw not: her heart was otherwhere;
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

ype of omen however was extispicium, a ystem of divination based upon the xamination of entrails (see LIVER), and neiromancy, the interpretation of the ymbolism of dreams (see DREAMS). nother curious method, based upon the novement of the wind, was capnomancy, r divination by means of smoke arising rom the burnt sacrifice. If the smoke scended perpendicularly the omen was ood, but if on the contrary it spread out in ome other direction it was unfavourable.

Yet another system of omen divination nvolved placing a finger at random upon he open page of a Bible and deciding from he text thus marked out what the fates had n store. In this example we see a reversal f roles, the human becoming the active agent while the omen represented by the text is passive.

The overlapping of the magical arts into the area of signs and portents can be clearly observed in apotropaic actions (intended to avert evil) like the ejection of spittle or making the sign of the cross, or 'touching wood'. The magical principle of 'like curing like' can be called upon in some cases to annul an evil omen. This process was described by Sir James Frazer as an attempt 'to circumvent destiny by accomplishing it in mimicry . . . substituting a mock calamity for a real one.' A very common subterfuge of this type occurs when the housewife defers to the superstition that casualties always occur in threes by snapping two matchsticks after breaking a piece of crockery, which is an expedient for making the omen run its course.

Public Portents

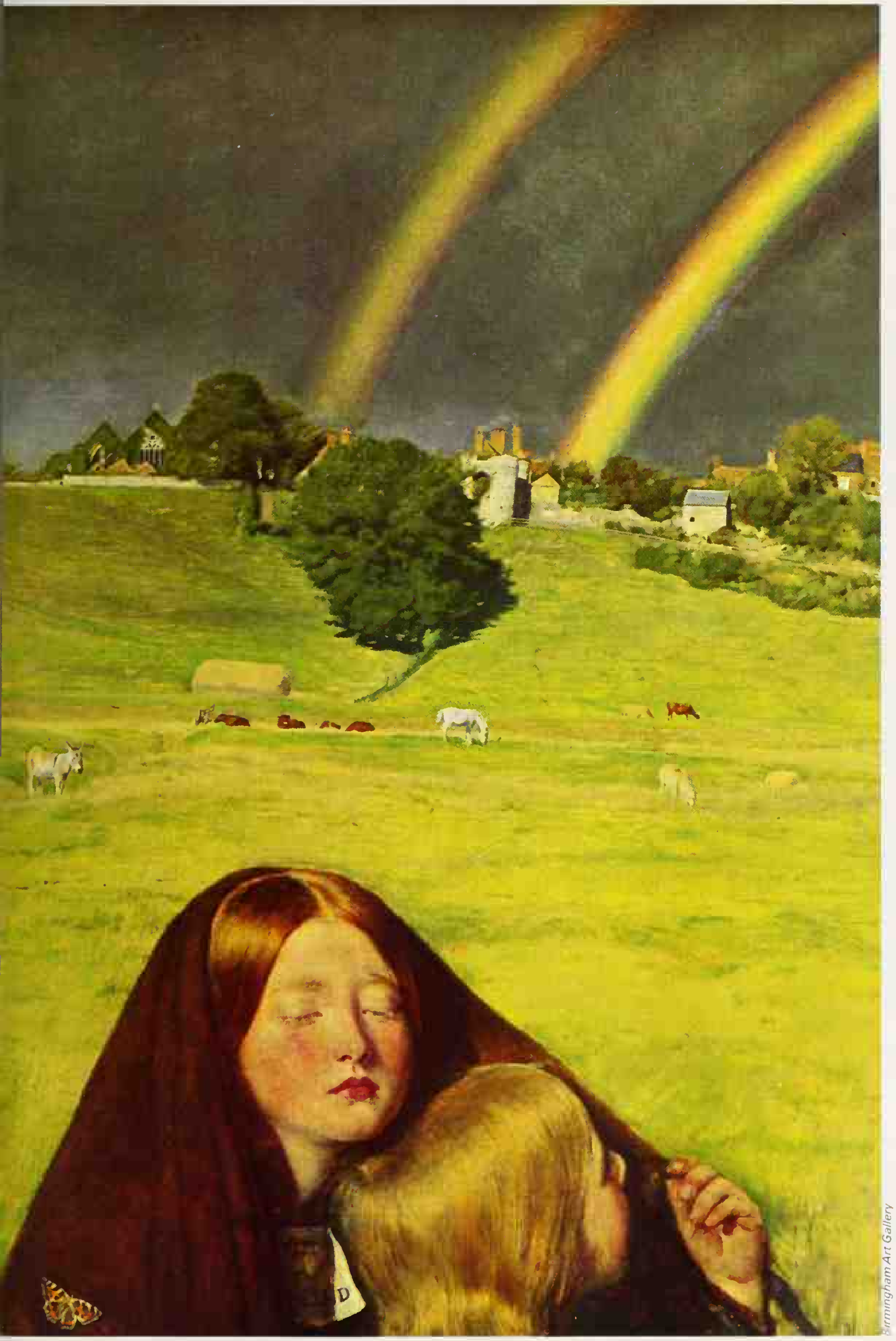
Belief in the power of omens has had a considerable influence on the course of history. Llodowick Lloyd in 1602 described in his *Stratagems of Jerusalem* how 'The First King of Rome builded his Kingdom by the flying of birds and soothsaying.' It is also recorded that the Emperor Constantine, while locked in battle with the barbarians, saw in the sky a shining cross with the words *In hoc signo vinces* (By this sign, conquer), which he then inscribed upon his banner and went forward to victory. The warriors led into battle by St Joan of Arc found encouragement from the vision of St Michael in the sky beckoning them onwards, and from the white dove of the Holy Spirit which by alighting on Joan's standard provided a favourable omen.

In the reign of Henry II (1133–1189), Peter of Blois gave solemn warning to one of his followers: 'Do not entangle yourself in the false opinion of those who fear to meet a hare, or a woman with flowing tresses, or a blind man or a lame man . . . or if a wolf meets them, or a martin flies from left to right, or if on setting forth they hear distant thunder or meet a hunchback or a leper.'

The revolutionary years of the 17th century were filled with ominous portents, among which were phantom armies marching through the clouds as if to announce the approach of civil war. When the Civil War finally shattered the English calm, it produced some very ominous portents, as at the trial of King Charles I when the head of his staff fell off. Before Cromwell's death, it is said, a terrible storm broke over the country and 'a great whale came to Greenwich'. King James II was apparently foredoomed to the loss of his kingdom by the omen noted by John Aubrey who recorded 'the tottering of the crown upon his head, the broken canopy over it, and the rent flag hanging from the White Tower when I came home from the Coronation'.

By 1832 science had begun to intrude into the folklore of omens. By a reversal of the usual process the comet prophesied for that year was regarded as the cause, rather than the sign of forthcoming disaster. Vast numbers of panic-stricken citizens, particularly in Germany, at once refrained from all commercial activities until finally convinced that a collision between the earth and the comet was not inevitable. Perhaps the last of the truly great omens of the modern age was the burning of the Crystal Palace in South London in 1936, a disaster considered by many people to be a sign of the coming of the Second World War.

(See also DIVINATION; LUCK.)



Birmingham Art Gallery

Unusual meteorological events, particularly in the heavens – comets and shooting stars, strangely-coloured sunsets, even unusual cloud forms – are especially likely to be regarded as omens of the future, because they reflect a disturbance of the normal patterns of Nature
Left **It is a sign of good fortune to see a rainbow, God's signal to Noah that the Flood was about to end: detail from *The Blind Girl*, by Millais**

OPPOSITES

'LOOKING BACK on my own experiences,' wrote the great American psychologist William James, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 'they all converge towards a kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some kind of metaphysical significance. The keynote of it is invariably a reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity. Not only do they, as contrasted species, belong to one and the same genus, but one of the species, the nobler and better one, is itself the genus and so soaks up and absorbs its opposite into itself. This is a dark saying, I know, when thus expressed in terms of common logic, but I cannot wholly escape from its authority.'

It is a common observation that man is torn between opposite tendencies, between love and indifference, dependence and independence, extraversion and introversion, intellect and instinct, and innumerable others. Similarly, the phenomena of the world outside can be classified in terms of opposites – life and death, light and darkness, good and evil, active and passive, positive and negative, matter and spirit, and many more. The course of Nature seems to swing from one opposite to the other and back again, like the pendulum of a clock. Night follows day, winter follows summer, decline follows growth, the crops are born and die and are born again. The tides flow in and out upon the shore, and the same rhythm seems to swell and ebb through all the universe.

This way of looking at things has been of great importance in religion and magic, and religious dualism is the tendency to see two powerful opposite principles at work throughout all existence (see DUALISM). But few people who see the world in this light are so simple-minded as to leave it at that, and few systems are uncompromisingly dualistic. They look behind the opposites for something greater, in which the opposites are contained and unified as the tides are in the sea, for the unity into which William James's opposites 'melted', for the One in which duality disappears.

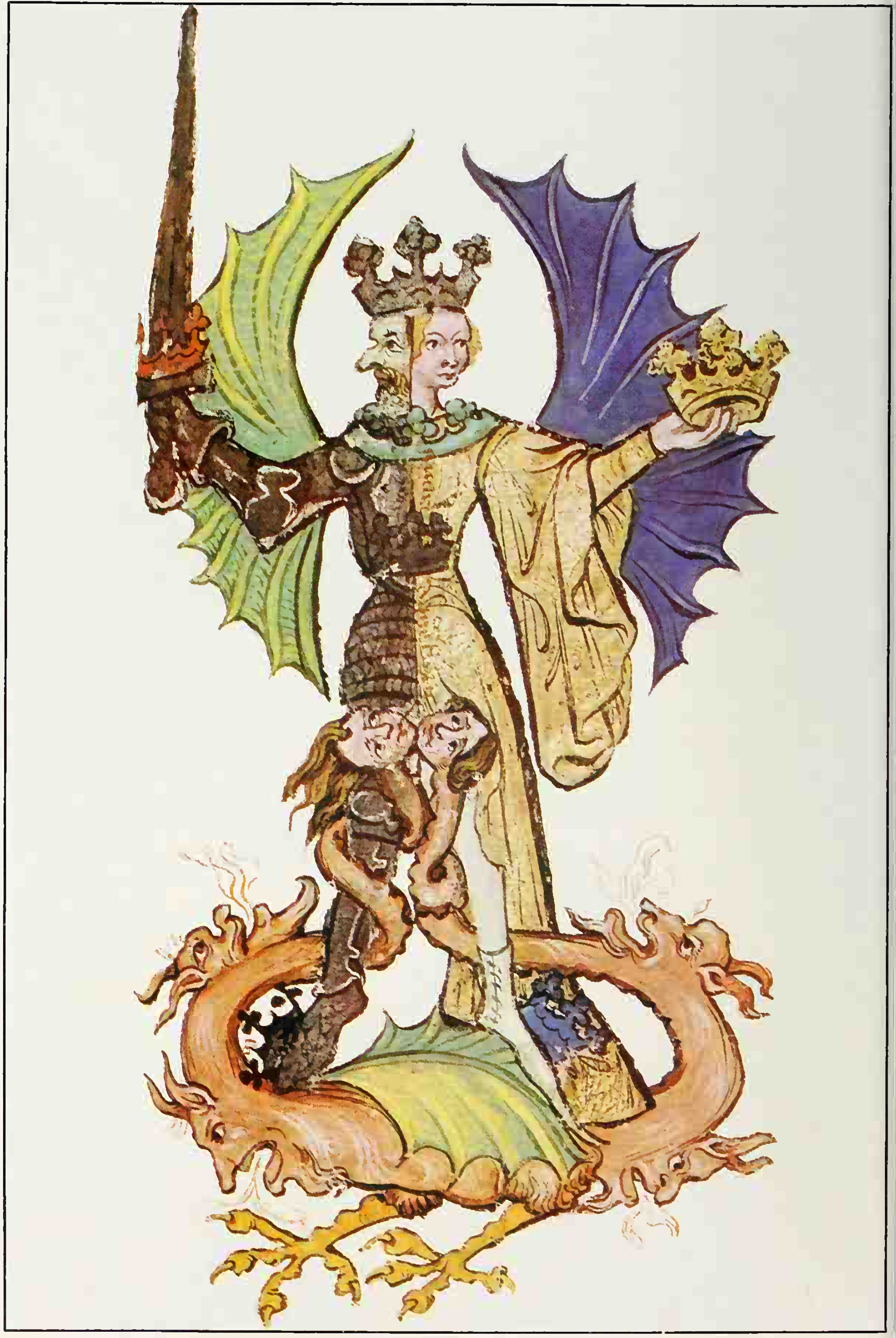
Reconciliation and Harmony

In China the interplay of the opposites of Yang and Yin was thought to underlie everything that existed, but they were united in something greater, the Tao. The lingam and the yoni, the male and female symbols, are united in Hindu temples. The central pillar of the Tree of Life in the Cabala reconciles and harmonizes the right and left pillars. The symbol of the cross unites two pairs of opposite directions with the centre. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (c 500 BC) said that God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, and all the opposites. In the New Testament St Paul says, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3.28), and in the Old Testament Isaiah (chapters 11 and 40) says that the wolf will dwell with the lamb and the leopard lie down with the kid, and every valley shall be lifted up and every mountain made low, when all opposites and contradictions disappear in the unity of the perfected world.

The Bisexual Ideal

For hundreds of years in Europe everything was believed to be made of four elements which combined two pairs of opposites – hot and cold, wet and dry. Aristotle said that the Pythagoreans saw ten fundamental pairs of opposites in the universe, and this has affected numerology ever since (see NUMEROLOGY). Astrologers say that opposites attract each other, so that you are likely to be drawn to people born under the sign opposite your own in the zodiac circle. One of the theories of animal magnetism (see MAGNETISM) was that the positive and negative poles of a magnet could be used to correct an imbalance of opposite forces in the body, and there is the same idea in acupuncture (see ACUPUNCTURE).

In some creation myths the making of the world begins with the separating out of opposites (light and darkness, for instance, or sky and earth) from a preceding totality.



The 'conjunction' or union of opposites, from a German alchemical MS: a hermaphrodite is frequently a symbol of the ideal being who has reconciled all opposite forces and factors in unity, and this is one of the purposes underlying the magical use of sex

C. G. Jung saw in this a reflection of the human mind. He says (in *Psychology and Alchemy*): 'The essence of the conscious mind is discrimination, it must, if it is to be aware of things, separate the opposites, and it does this *contra naturam* [against nature]. In nature the opposites seek one another... and so it is in the unconscious, and particularly in the archetype of unity, the self. Here, as in deity, the opposites cancel out. But as soon as the unconscious begins to manifest itself they split asunder, as at the Creation; for every act of dawning consciousness is a creative act, and it is from this psychological experience that all our cosmogonic symbols are derived.'

What Jung called 'individuation' was the reconciliation of the opposites of human nature in a complete self ('the archetype of unity') and he was impressed by the emphasis which the alchemists placed on the union of opposites. The Philosophers' Stone itself is often described as a mysterious reconciliation of contradictions – it is made of fire and water, it is a stone but at the same time it is not a stone, it comes from God and yet it does not come from God. One reason for the importance of mercury in alchemy, and for its occasional identification with the Stone, is that it seems to combine opposites, in being a metal and also a liquid, and in being liquid but not wet. It was called 'the masculine-feminine' and was frequently depicted as a hermaphrodite.

The 'conjunction' or union of opposites in alchemy was symbolized by the marriage of king and queen, of sun and moon, of the red man and the white woman. Or it might be shown as incest between brother and sister, or mother and son, or as the re-entry of the son or the king or the dragon into the womb of the mother, to indicate the mingling of opposites which had separated out from an original unity.

The Perfect Human Being

There is the same symbolism in the ideal of the androgyne or hermaphrodite as the perfect human being, who has unified all the opposites. In *The Two and the One* Mircea Eliade quotes one of the German Romantics on the ideal human of the future: 'Eve was engendered by man without the aid of woman; Christ was engendered by woman without the aid of man; the androgyne will be born of the two. But the husband and wife will be fused together in a single flash.' And the poet and scholar Friedrich von Schlegel (died 1829) believed that 'the goal towards which the human race should strive is a progressive reintegration of the sexes which should end in androgyny.' The tradition that Adam was originally bisexual probably stems from the idea that God, and man as made in the image of God, must combine all opposites to be perfect (see also FIRST MAN; HERMAPHRODITE).

The union of the sexes is the stock European occultist's example of a reconciliation of opposites which is physically fruitful (in the conception of a child) and also spiritually and magically fruitful. The magical ideal is 'the whole man', the man who unites all human characteristics and potentialities in harmony, the man who is all that a human being could possibly be, and so, in effect, the man who has become the One, or God. To do this, he must bring all the opposite forces of his nature into balance.

This is one reason for the importance of sex in magic. Richard Cavendish says (in *The Black Arts*): 'Many magical ceremonies are deliberately designed to summon up and unleash the animal driving forces from the deeps of human nature. The whole man is to be raised to the power of infinity, not man as civilized thinker or man as ravening beast, but man as a combination of both.' It follows that although the magician may use sex in a magical operation as a powerful source of energy, he must not allow himself to be carried away on the floodtide of desire. He must master it and subordinate it to his purposes.

One result is the importance of 'balance' in magical ceremonies, of maintaining an equilibrium between opposite forces so that they can be equally blended in a greater whole. The principle is by no means confined to the West. 'Yoga is a harmony' says the *Bhagavad Gita*. 'Not for him who eats too much or for him who eats too little; not for him who sleeps too little, or for him who sleeps too much' (see BHAGAVAD GITA). And the Gita teaches the lesson that God is not only perfect peace but also its opposite, irresistible power, for it ends with a vision of 'Deity in all its blazing fury'.

OPUS ANGLICANUM

THE FAMOUS RELIGIOUS EMBROIDERY executed in England in the Middle Ages, which was in great demand throughout Europe, was known as *opus anglicanum*, meaning 'English work'.

This medieval use of embroidery in the service of religion has a long and fascinating history. The Latin phrase for 'to embroider' was *acu pingere*, that is 'to paint with a needle', and the art can be traced back to ancient Babylonia, where it was used to decorate the ceremonial robes of kings. A notable example of such work appears on a statue of Queen Tiye, the wife of Amenhotep III (c 1405—1367 BC). The Queen wears a dress embroidered with a bird's wing design signifying her association with the vulture mother goddess Mut.

The Hebrew scriptures abound with references to the cultic use of embroidery. According to Exodus 26.31, the God of Israel instructs Moses on the furnishings of the Tabernacle, where the Ark of the Testimony was to be set as the place of Yahweh's presence: 'And you shall make veil of blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen: in skilled work shall it be made, with cherubim; and you shall hang it upon four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold... and the veil shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy'. Late directions are given for a screen at the entrance of the Tabernacle, 'embroidered with needlework'. Yahweh also orders that there should be made for the high priest 'a girdle embroidered with needlework'. The reference to the figures of cherubim is especially interesting, for these mysterious winged beings guarded the throne of Yahweh. The Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the 1st century AD, describes the veil in the sanctuary of the Temple at Jerusalem as it was in his day: 'of Babylonian tapestry, with embroidery of blue and fine linen, of scarlet also and purple wrought with marvellous skill'. Its pattern had a mystic meaning, typifying the universe but with the signs of the zodiac omitted.

Treasury of Medieval Faith

Inspired by these biblical examples of the cultic use of embroidery, Christians soon began to use both tapestry and embroidery for the furnishing of churches and the vestments of the ministers. Early examples of both survive from Coptic Egypt. In early Byzantine churches the altar and choir were closed off by veils which were later supplanted by the solid screen known as the *iconostasis*. They were decorated with appropriate biblical scenes (the wise and foolish virgins, or Christ and the apostles). A notable form of Byzantine embroidery from the 13th century was the *epitaphion*, used on Good Friday, on which the body of Christ in the tomb was portrayed.

The later achievements of English medieval embroidery are foreshadowed in the famous St Cuthbert vestments at Durham. They were given about 934 by King Athelstan to St Cuthbert's shrine at Chester-le-Street. Embroidered on these stoles or maniples are figures of saints or prophets.

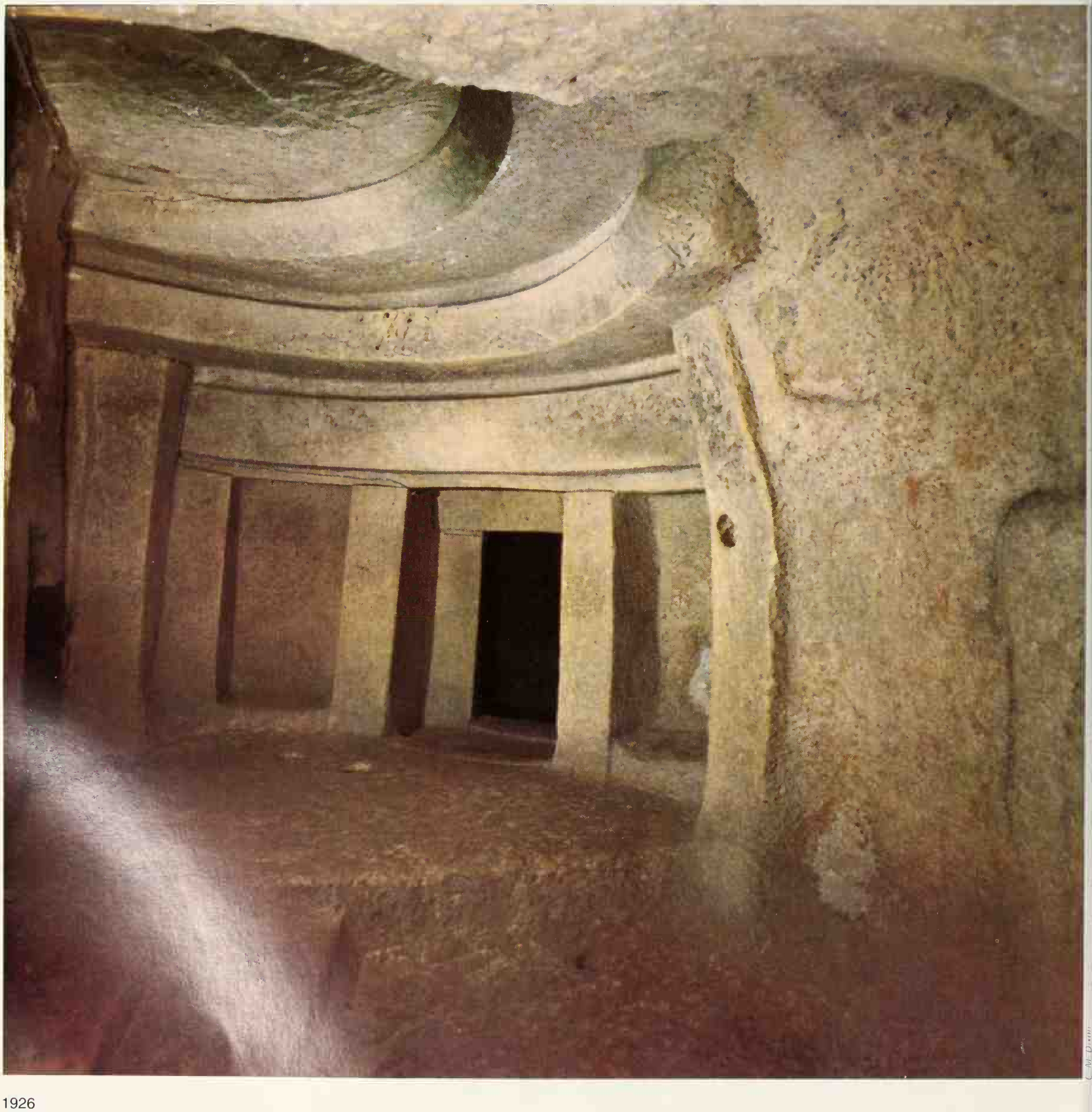
The embroidery of England began to be internationally famous and sought after from the time of Henry III (1207-72), and it developed into a professional undertaking in which both men and women were employed, after serving an apprenticeship of seven years. Some indication of its fame is given by the fact that the great Vatican inventory of 1295 includes more pieces of *opus anglicanum* than any other type of embroidery. It did indeed constitute England's unique contribution to the great achievement of medieval art.

Although it had its secular use in heraldic embroidery, it was to the service of religion that the resources of *opus anglicanum* were mainly devoted. Medieval religious art had two chief aims: to dedicate human skills and riches to the glory of God, and to proclaim graphically to the faithful the great truths of Catholic Christianity. The art of embroidery was pre-eminently suited to performing both these functions, combining human artistry with the richest of materials – silk, silver-gilt thread, pearls and precious stones – in the service of the Church. And the vestments and furnishings, on which this art and wealth were expended, provided means of portraying the doctrines of the faith and instructing the people.

In England most of this work was destroyed at the Reformation; but some of its finest products are still to be seen in Continental cathedrals and museums.

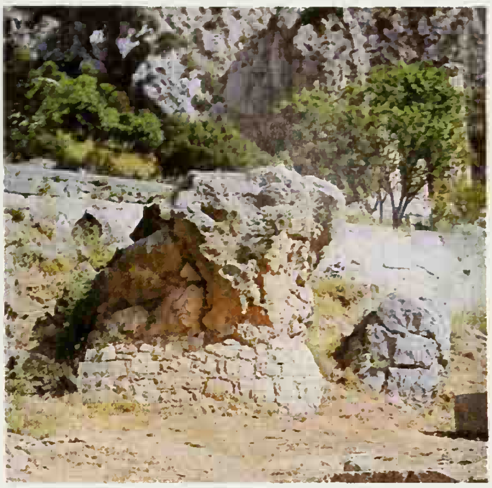
ORACLES

GUIDANCE FROM THE GODS



C.M. Dixon

Sonia Halliday



Sonia Halliday

Left **The most influential oracle of the classical world was that of Apollo at Delphi, on the slopes of Mount Parnassus *Above* The 'rock of the sibyl' at Delphi: the sibyl, or medium, went into trance to deliver oracles which were often ambiguous and enigmatic *Far left* The booming echo of the Oracle Room of the Hypogeum in Malta suggests that this room was used to consult oracles through a priestly elite *Following page* Temple of Apollo at Didyma in Asia Minor; when the future of the pagan oracles was threatened by Christianity the priests of Didyma supported the Emperor Diocletian in his persecution of the early Christians**

Questions about settling a workmen's strike, or solving a problem of paternity, were among those put to the ancient oracles, while in primitive societies the witch-doctor must combine the qualities of a psychologist with those of a professional detective

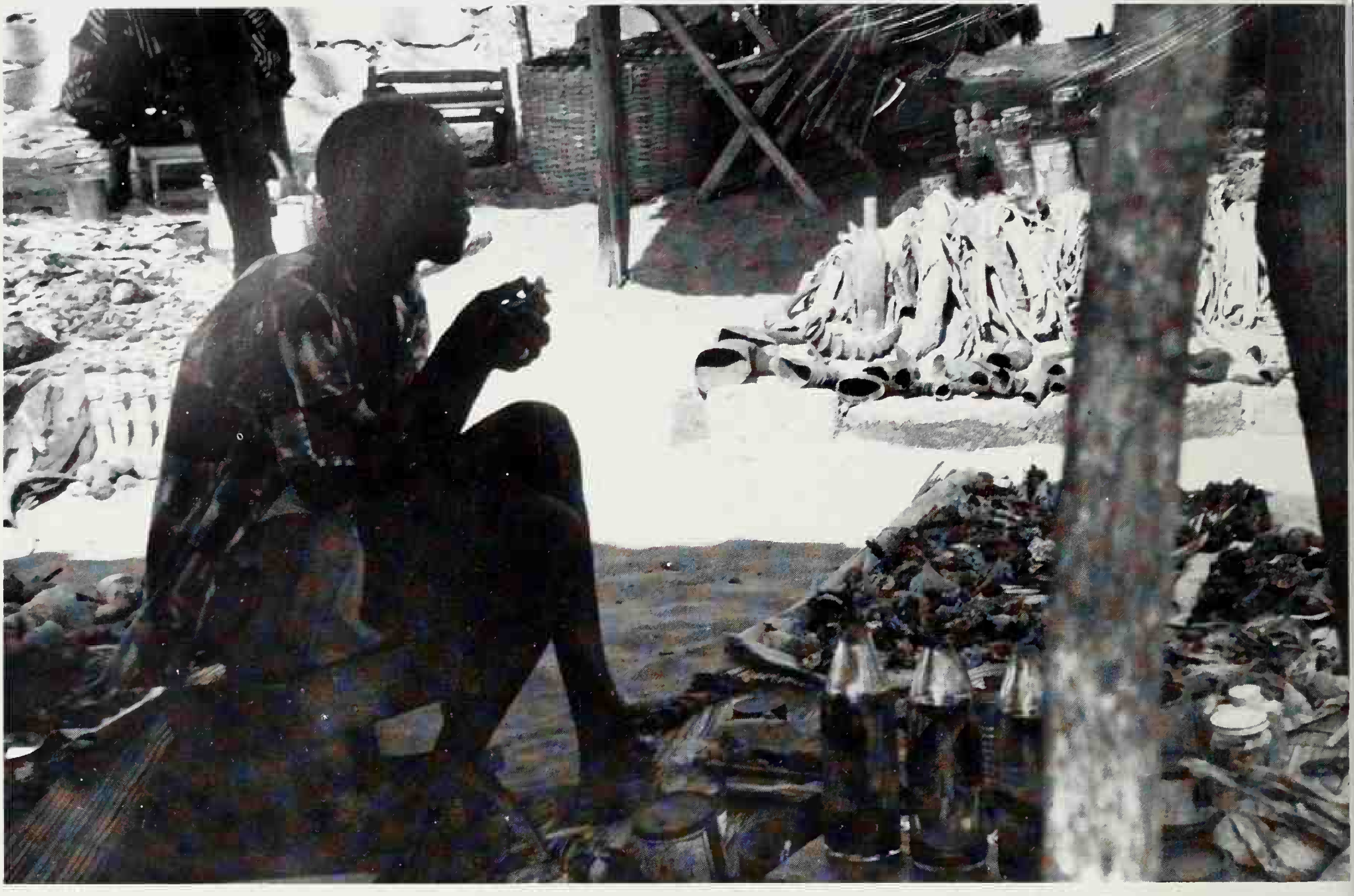
THE ANCIENT GREEKS felt a deep need for guidance in the problems of life, but, unlike believers in the modern world who are guided by the Bible, the Koran or the holy books of Eastern religions, the Greeks had no such sacred writings. Greek poets were often thought to be inspired by the Muses, but this did not make their poetry the word of God. Even their priests were of little help. Their function was to perform public worship, mostly by offering sacrifices to particular gods, but they delivered no sermons and heard no confessions. At best they could decide technical questions of religious law – whether a certain act had made the inquirer impure and how he could be cleansed. But at a number of temples throughout the Greek world there were oracles to which the inquirer, whether a private individual or a state, could bring a question and receive an answer which was supposed to express the will of the gods. These temples were mostly dedicated to Apollo, whose cult had spread from Asia Minor to Greece (see APOLLO).

The chief feature of the oracles was that the replies were delivered by a man or a woman who had been put into a trance and who would answer from the subconscious. In the trance the medium would speak with a changed voice and personality, understood to be Apollo himself speaking through his instrument; this was apparently confirmed when the medium on returning to normal consciousness could not recollect what had been said. The modern psychologist finds no difficulty in explaining that such a trance is produced by suggestions. If a simple worshipper of Apollo were brought up to believe that on entering the innermost shrine of the god, after various elaborate ceremonies had been performed, he or she would be inspired, then by carrying through the appropriate ritual that effect would actually be produced. The priests who conducted the ceremonies need not consciously apply hypnotism to the medium. The suggestion implanted years before by the traditional practices would operate of itself.

Costly Consultations

The answers of the medium when in a trance might often be confused. This was satisfactorily explained to the ancient Greeks by the belief that the gods, and particularly Apollo, did not answer man's questions candidly, but could be expected to bewilder and even mislead the rash inquirer by ambiguous and enigmatic answers. Actually the inquirer did not usually receive the medium's utterance direct. He was allowed to listen when the question was put and then after the medium had spoken; but a priestly functionary would convey the official version of the answer, often in verse. One is inclined to suspect that this was the point at which human intelligence in the person of the priests took a part in the framing of the oracle. Particularly when the inquirer had

Sonia Halliday



Blood for Blood

Orestes has been instructed by Apollo through the oracle at Delphi to kill his mother and thereby avenge the death of his father

ORESTES: The word of Apollo is of great power and cannot fail.
His voice, urgent, insistent, drives me to dare this peril,
Chilling my heart's hot blood with recital of threatened terrors,
If I should fail to exact fit vengeance, like for like,
From those who killed my father. This was the god's command:
'Shed blood for blood, your face set like a flint. The price
They owe no wealth can weigh.' My very life, he said,
Would pay, in endless torment, for disobedience . . .
But when, he said,
A father's blood lies unavenged, and time grows ripe,
The neglectful son sees yet more fearful visitations,
As, towards eyes that strain and peer in darkness, come
The attacking Furies, roused by inherited blood-guilt,
Armed with arrows of the dark, with madness, false night-terrors,
To harass, plague, torment – to scourge him forth from his city
With the brazen lash, in loathed and abject filthiness.
Banquet and wine, grace of libation, he may not share –
This was the oracle's word; his father's anger, unseen,
Bars him from every altar; no man may receive him
Or share his lodging; scorned, friendless and alone, at length
He lies a shrivelled husk, horribly embalmed by death.

Aeschylus *The Choephori*
(trans. Philip Vellacott.)

not been a private individual, but an embassy from a state presenting a political question – such as the advisability of a given alliance or the outcome of a prospective war – the priests might very well have wished for reasons of policy to favour one particular line. Then the confused words of the medium were shaped by the priest to express the official view.

It is not surprising that this rather elaborate ritual of inquiry was expensive for the private individual and could only be used rather infrequently. At Delphi, for instance, in the 5th and 4th centuries BC the minimum charge was the equivalent of two days' wages for an Athenian, and he would have to pay additional sums in free-will offerings, as well as his travelling expenses. States were charged by the priests at ten times the rate for private persons. This full-scale form of consultation was only available on one day a month – the seventh, which was traditionally Apollo's birthday – and the oracle was closed for the three months during the winter when Delphi was difficult to reach by sea or by the mountain roads.

On the actual day consultations went on from morning to night. Two women with a third in reserve acted as mediums on a shift system for it must have been exhausting work even if the mediums were accustomed to it. If there were many inquirers or if the ceremonies did not go smoothly, some applicants would be left disappointed at the end of the day before their turn had arrived. Because of this, the Delphians used to confer on some states or individuals an honorary precedence which evidently guaranteed them a high place in the queue. Otherwise positions were determined by a ballot.

Simpler and cheaper forms of oracle were available more frequently. The commonest was by a process of drawing lots. This was also practised at Delphi, but little is known of it there. Its favourite oracle centre was in the far west of Greece at Dodona, in a mountainous region near the modern town of Jannina. There an oracle of Zeus had existed from the second millennium BC. Originally it was associated with a sacred oak which was said to utter prophecies itself, which were interpreted by its priests, the Selloi, who observed the curious taboos of sleeping on the bare

Peter Larsen

At the great Greek oracle of Zeus at Dodona the god's answers to questions were obtained by drawing lots, probably black and white beans. In Africa oracles may be obtained from the relative positions of objects in a witch-doctor's bag, after it has been shaken up *Left* Tools of the witch-doctor's trade at a market in Dahomey *Above* Drumming to summon spirits in Dahomey: it is a widespread belief that oracles can be drawn from the dead, who can see the future because they are no longer bound to the human time-scale

ground and not washing their feet. All this strange ritual is not typical of Greece as a whole. In fact its nearest analogies come from pagan Prussia where there were also sacred oaks and priests with these curious taboos (see OAK).

Advice on Personal Problems

Consultation at Dodona was by drawing lots: inquirers were given thin strips of lead on which they wrote their questions. These were usually expected to be framed so that they could be answered 'yes' or 'no'. The strip was then rolled up so that the questions could not be read, and the name of the inquirer or a number was scratched on the back. Thus the secrecy of the question could be guaranteed. The questions were put into a jar, and the priestess drew them out, one by one, while at the same time drawing a lot for each, probably a bean coloured black or white to show whether the god's answer was 'yes' or 'no'.

It is fortunate that this simple method was used at Dodona, for some hundreds of these strips of lead have been found: some of them still folded, others showing signs of having been smoothed out after one inquiry and then used again for another. They illustrate the rich variety of questions posed to the oracle. A few are from cities: Corfu asked about goodwill among its citizens; a town in Thessaly whether it might invest the funds of its goddess; the people of Dodona itself 'whether it is on account of the impurity of some human being that the god is sending the bad weather'. But most of the questions were from private individuals, pouring out their own personal troubles: 'Gerioton asks Zeus concerning a wife whether it is better for him to take one.' 'Lysanias asks Zeus whether the child is not from him with which Annyla is pregnant.' 'Leontios consults concerning his son Leon whether there will be recovery from the disease on his breast which seizes him.' 'Cleotas asks Zeus if it is better and more profitable for him to keep sheep.' All the practical problems of life show up, and the confusions and anxieties of inquirers are revealed in their clumsy expressions and individual handwriting. The would-be sheep farmer, for instance, was visibly unused to writing.

For some centuries the oracles at Dodona and Delphi engaged in professional rivalry and competition. Dodona claimed to be the sanctuary of the 'father of gods and men', and the oldest oracle in Greece. Delphi asserted that Apollo who spoke through its medium was the chosen mouthpiece of Zeus. Both priesthoods claimed a share in Greece's legendary past. But under the rule of the Roman Empire, Dodona was destroyed and Delphi continued but mainly only as a tourist centre.

By this time, the centre of population and wealth had shifted to Asia Minor. In what is now the thinly-populated coast of western Turkey there were huge new temples dedicated to Apollo and equipped with oracles within easy reach of crowded commercial cities. The temples have recently been excavated, and some of their history revealed. At Didyma, for example, a colossal temple had been begun about 300 BC but over four centuries later it was still not quite completed. It contained a magnificent ceremonial staircase, obviously designed for religious processions, and a huge window in the facade of the temple from which the prophet could announce the god's oracles. Some of the questions which Apollo answered are curiously modern. One was the settlement of a strike of workmen building the theatre at Miletus.

Guidance from a Fountain

Didyma's chief rival was Claros, about 100 miles north. The old Greek colonies favoured Didyma, but the new towns consulted Claros. Corresponding to this division, the oracle of Didyma spoke in classical verse while that of Claros went in for all sorts of lively metres in a new style. The cities that consulted Claros often did it annually, and this civic outing included a choir who sang a hymn to Apollo specially composed by one of the citizens. The

Like all oracles, ancient and modern, the witch-doctor must be a shrewd psychologist familiar with his clients' personality and background

consultation itself must have been an exciting occasion. The inquirer was brought by night to a passage in the temple leading to the subterranean vaults. There was only room to walk in single file guided by torchlight, and the maze-like corridor led by six right-angled turns to a hall where the consultants could sit while the prophetic medium continued to an underground fountain whose water was supposed to convey the inspiration. The experience must have been awe-inspiring. But sometimes it may have been conducted rather hypocritically. The medium was supposed to get a list of inquirers' names and then, without knowing their questions, to give the appropriate answers in verse. But a Cynic philosopher who received an ambiguous reply, apparently promising him rewards after toil, found on investigation that the same verses had been uttered to a number of other consultants who, as he grimly remarks, had all experienced the toil, but none of them the promised blessings.

At last, in the 3rd century AD, the work of the various oracles seems to have petered out. It was a time of economic and political collapse in the Roman Empire. Individuals were abandoning official religion and seeking refuge in private cults and magic. Christianity was gaining ground and was the chief critic of the oracles, which it regarded as the personal utterances of devils. In reply, the priests of Didyma tried to organize a combined front of all pagan beliefs and supported the Roman Emperor Diocletian in his persecution of the Christians. But Christianity triumphed, and devastations in the inner sanctuaries at Delphi and Dodona bear witness to the vengeance of the new religion.

The oracles had fulfilled a human need which was thereafter to be satisfied by other methods. Our evidence from ancient times is not sufficient to prove whether in any instance they had really used supernormal or supernatural powers. No doubt the trances of the prophetic mediums were genuine enough. The answers which they gave, or were said to have given, for centuries convinced the majority of inquirers. This belief was chiefly produced by the oracles conveying the assurance that the gods were guiding the human questioner in the problem which he had laid before them.

H. W. PARKE

The Primitive Oracle

The oracle is an essential element in all primitive religions. It is consulted wherever men wish to know the cause of their present misfortunes or the shape of things to come, for the oracle is the medium between gods and mortals.

In truly primitive races, the profound belief in spirits, ghosts, witches, and unseen forces leads to a deep-seated reliance on the visionary powers of the oracle. And the principal difference between the oracles of African pagans, for instance, and those of more sophisticated cultures is that the former are just as much concerned with what has happened as with what is to come.

Both the Australian aborigines and the African tribes consult their soothsayers to explain the cause of death, the presence of danger, the reason for droughts, and so on. In all such cases, the malevolence of some evil person or spirit is suspected so that it becomes essential for the safety of the community that a specialist in the occult is available to give guidance.

Many methods of discovering the secrets of the unknown are employed by primitive people. Necromancy, or communication with the spirits of the dead, is probably the oldest of the diviner's arts, since primitives do not accept death as a 'natural' phenomenon but believe that a 'dead' person continues to take part in the communal life and can be asked for help through the medium of an oracle.

Among Voodoo exponents in the West Indies (see VOODOO) it is still believed that dead men in the form of zombies can be summoned from the grave to intervene in human affairs. The Western version is seen in the cult of Spiritualism (see SPIRITUALISM) whereby the medium acts as the oracle and, like the witch-doctor or the Delphic priestesses, enters into a state of trance in order to act as a mediator between the known and the unknown world.

Oneiromancy, or divination by dreams, is also a very ancient form of the oracular process (see DREAMS). Hydromancy (water or crystal-gazing), pyromancy (fire-watching) and astrology are all practised among primitive people, but the high priest of divination is always the witch-doctor, a student of magical arts, a specialist in the occult, and a respected member of society.

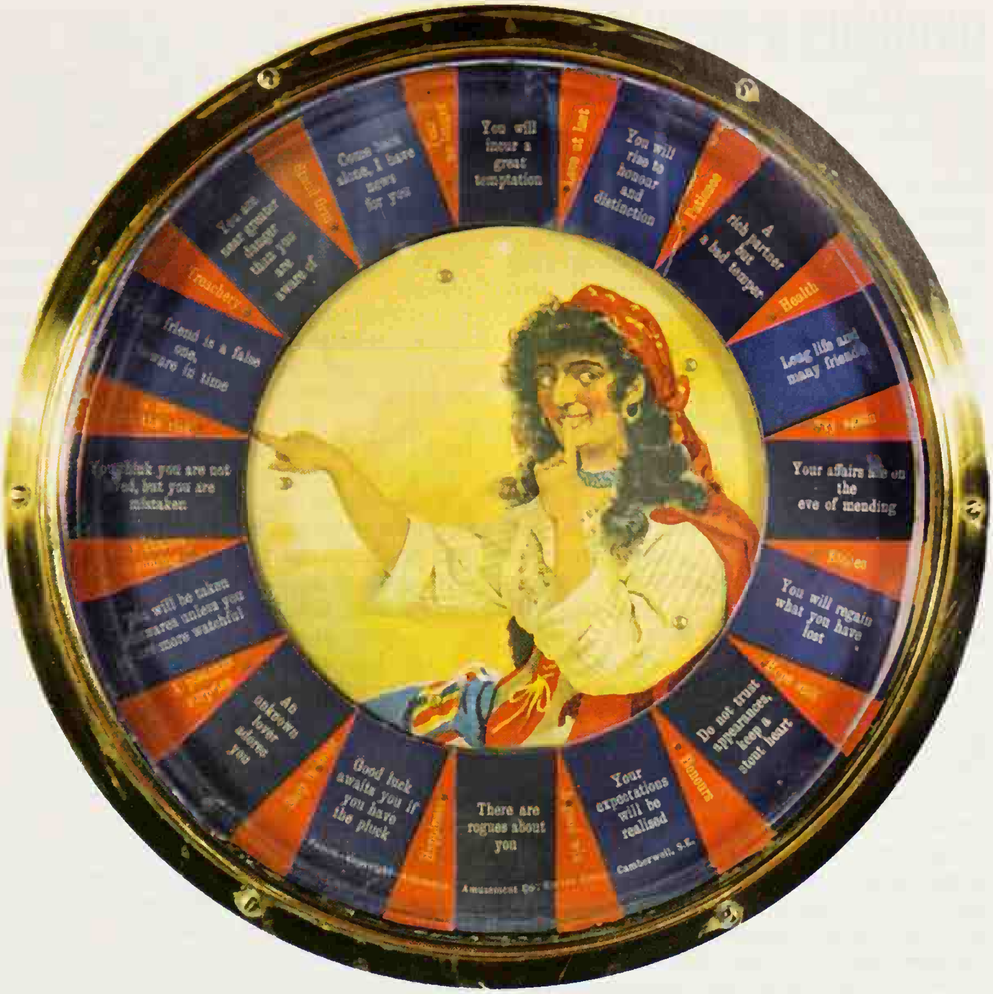
The typical witch-doctor wears a headdress of gaudy feathers, daubs his face with red and white clay, and wears a cloak dangling with the claws, heads and tails of animals. The paraphernalia of his art is kept in his basket, which might be filled perhaps with the following objects: some skin or bone from the forehead of a dead chief; a piece of the nerve from inside an elephant's tusk; the hair of an albino; the wing-case of a big beetle; the feather of a grey parrot; a piece of charcoal from the site where a witch was burnt; part of the burnt heart or liver of a witch; charcoal from the camp fire where novices were circumcised; a root dug up from under such a fire; the horn of an antelope; the shell of a small tortoise filled with 'medicine'.

When the witch-doctor has made his preparations and is ready to consult the oracle, either on the cause of some disaster or the outcome of a future event, he shakes up the basket and proceeds to examine the relative position of each item. The secret of his art consists in knowing the significance of his various ju-jus. Thus, the relics of a dead chief signify renown or fame. The prominent appearance of the elephant tusk nerve means impotence or infertility. The beetle's wing-case suggests the presence of a witch, a lump of charcoal from the camp fire where novices have been circumcised means a big gathering of the tribe.

If a witch or some other evil-doer is suspected, the witch-doctor may produce his 'magic' tortoise to pronounce the oracle. This animal usually has the feather of a guinea fowl inserted into its anus, the theory being that both tortoise and guinea fowl are always looking for their prey. The person towards whom the medium waves the feather is held responsible for the crime or misfortune which the diviner has been called in to solve. To those who might object to the haphazard results of this form of magic, the reply would be that God will protect the innocent.

Shrewd Psychologist

Why do people, both primitive and civilized, accept the pronouncements of oracles which their reason tells them are illogical? The answer in the case of African pagans is that the witch-doctor does not rely solely on mumbo-jumbo to practise his art. Like all oracles, ancient and modern, he must be a shrewd psychologist, familiar with his clients' personality and background. The


Come back
alone, I have
news
for you
You will
incur a
great
temptation
Love at last
You will
rise to
honour
and
distinction
Patience
A
rich partner
but
a bad temper
Health
Long life and
many friends
Your affairs are on
the
eve of mending
Riches
You will regain
what you have
lost
Do not trust
appearances,
keep a
stout heart
Honours
Your
expectations
will be
realised
Camberwell, S.E.
There are
rogues about
you
Amusement Co.
Good luck
awaits you if
you have
the pluck
An
unknown
lover
adores
you
will be taken
unless you
more watchful
You think you are not
loved, but you are
mistaken
friend is a false
one,
beware in time
Treachery
You are
near greater
danger
than you
are
aware of

A modern Western oracle, the wheel of fortune; ike many other oracles, it is based on the belief that things do not occur by chance, so hat signs of the future can be drawn from apparently random occurrences

primitive diviner has a great advantage in hat he knows many facts about the members of his community and so is able to make his predictions on the basis of his observations.

To this extent his 'magic' is comparable with the scientific aids used every day by civilized people to predict coming events. For example, the height in a column of mercury in a barometer foretells a change in the weather. To the pygmy or bushman the light of birds or the behaviour of animals is a similar means of divination. Where he differs from the less-superstitious Westerner s that he does not admit that there is any such thing as the laws of chance.

The divining rod is still used almost everywhere in the world to find water or metal. In the hands of a witch-doctor, the wand s relied upon to discover evil-doers exactly as it was in medieval Europe to track down witches, criminals and heretics.

It is easy to see, therefore, why the primitive oracle has always been an integral part of paganism, the 'natural' religion of people who have no other means of foretelling the future. The oracle is a specialist in the occult, and when the witch-doctor enters into a trance-like state, he is believed to be in communication with unseen powers.

On the other hand, observers who have watched him at work point out that he always begins his seance by staring each member of his audience in the face. He takes care to ask them, 'Why have you come to me?' From that question he proceeds to others which gradually bring out the facts he needs to know. And it is very likely that under his stern cross-examination, the guilty person will give himself away, or the individual who has come for a glimpse of what the future holds will hint at what it is that he wants.

The diviner can then proceed with the magical part of his 'act', shaking up his basket and carefully studying the relative positions of its contents. And like a good fortune teller anywhere, he is able to put two and two together and using a little psychology, make his predictions.

Such, at any rate, is the rational explanation of the art of divination. But psychologists themselves admit that not all occult manifestations can be explained away so easily, particularly in the case of primitive oracles. For there are many examples of mystical phenomena which baffle the realists, phenomena which are accepted by primitive races as evidence of the existence of unseen forces. For this reason they have implicit faith in their oracles who speak to them through the medium of the witch-doctor, who holds an important and as respected a position in pagan communities as the psychiatrist does in civilized societies. (See also AZANDE.)

JAMES WELLARD

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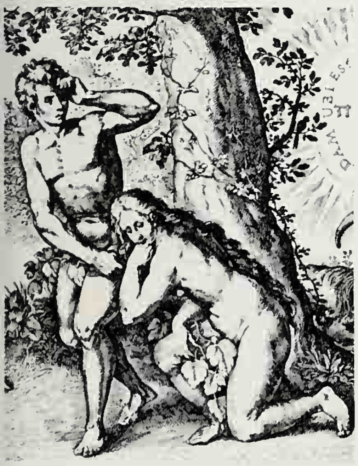


Original Sin

In Christian theology, a taint of sinfulness and predisposition to evil, with which all human beings are infected from birth, apart from and in addition to the sins which they actually commit during their lives; traditionally, this taint stems from Adam's disobedience in Eden and has been inherited by mankind, his descendants.

See EVIL; FIRST MAN; MAN.

ERIDANUS
Aldebaran
Betelgeuse
Bellatrix
Rigel

Mansell Collection

Orion

Constellation which resembles a man with belt and sword; named for a gigantic and beautiful hunter of Greek mythology who was killed by the goddess Artemis and despatched to the sky; revered by the Egyptians, who saw in it the figure of the god Osiris.

ORPHEUS & ORPHISM

THERE IS really no such thing as Orphism. There is Orpheus, the legendary singer, about whom various stories are told; and there is Orphic literature, that is, a mass of poems, mainly now lost, composed in different places at different periods for different purposes, and for the most part having nothing in common except that Orpheus was claimed as their author. Until not very long ago, it was taken for granted that these poems collectively represented the teaching of a body of people called The Orphics, and a great religious movement called Orphism was constructed and extensively written about.

The truth is that no prophet or sect had a monopoly of Orpheus' name. The 'Orphic' poems fit into no overall scheme. The most that can be said is that under the Roman Empire one poem of a somewhat encyclopedic nature achieved a sort of canonical authority: new Orphic poems took account of it, and academic theologians accepted it as the authentic revelation of Orpheus. Its vogue is one thing that might be called Orphism.

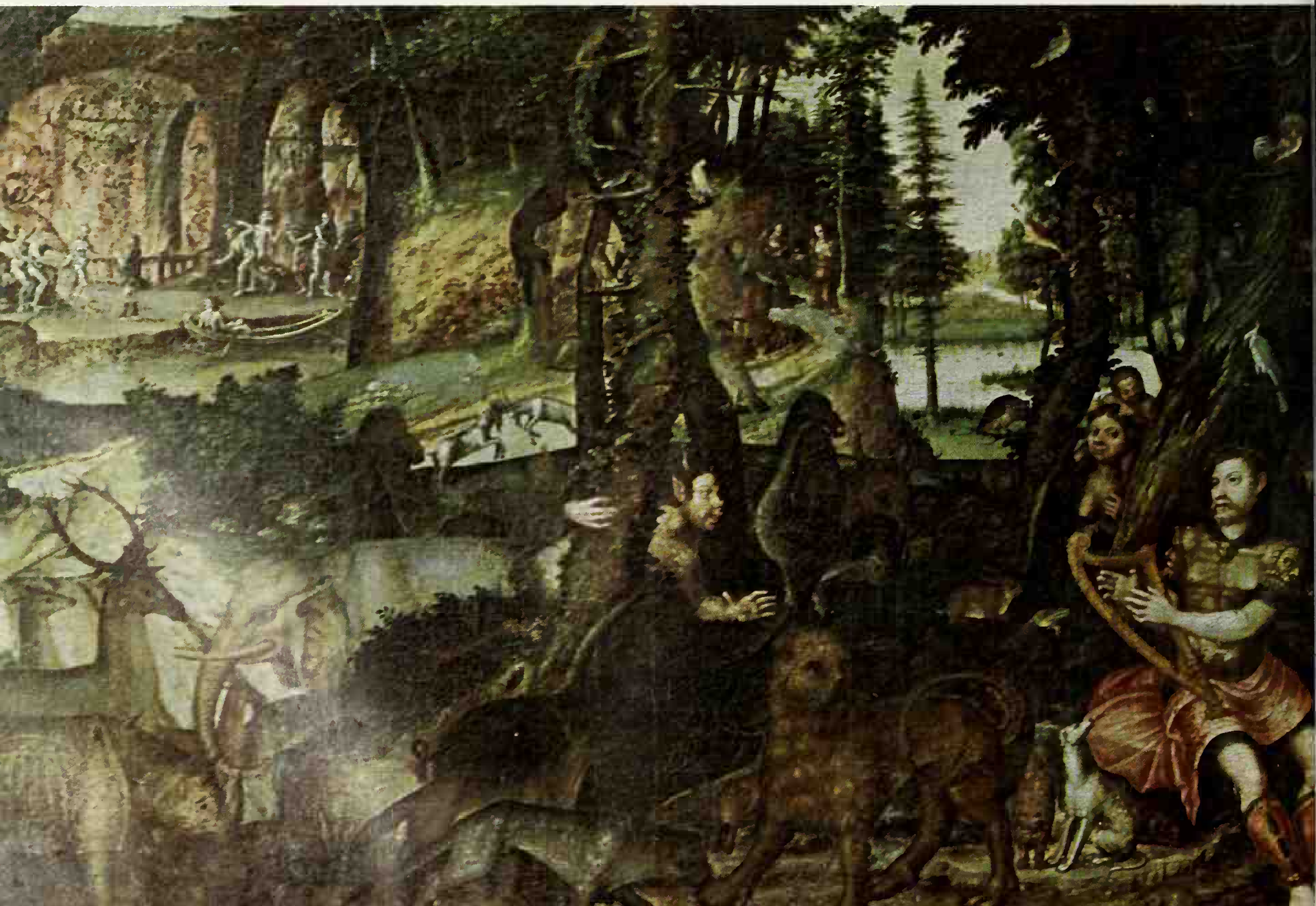
Orpheus, like several other legendary singers was held to come from Thrace, the semi-barbarous, semi-mythical country to the north of Greece; or from Mount Olympus, where the Muses themselves were born. And according to an alternative account of his parentage, Orpheus was born from the Muse Calliope and the most musical of gods, Apollo. But he was a mortal, with mortal descendants. Genealogies were constructed which made him the ancestor of other famous minstrels, including Homer. The number of generations inserted in these genealogies implies a belief that Orpheus belonged to a period well before the Trojan War (13th century BC, on our reckoning). That is a period well covered by a network of Greek legends and genealogies which may preserve some genuine memories of the Mycenean age. But Orpheus, as a Thracian, stands outside the Mycenean world, and is only very loosely connected with the main body of heroic mythology.

Legends of Orpheus

Probably the best known of the stories about him is that he sang so beautifully with his lyre that not only the creatures of the wild came and stood entranced around him, but even the rivers stayed in their courses, and the rocks and trees came sidling down from the mountain. This eccentric miracle has no context, it is not associated with any particular occasion. It is true that a similar effect is produced when Orpheus sings for the Argonauts, but that was at sea, and the typical trees and rocks are absent. The story was that Orpheus took part in Jason's famous expedition to get the Golden Fleece. Though not a stalwart fellow, he came in very useful, for among the dangers that had to be overcome on the voyage were the Sirens, who lured sailors to their shore with their beautiful singing, to sit and listen till they wasted away. Orpheus saved the Argonauts by striking up in competition. The tale belongs to the type common in folk literature, in which a group o companions undertake a difficult task an are able to survive a series of danger because each of them has some special skill It is older than the *Odyssey*, in which th Sirens are one of several motifs transferre from the Argonauts to Odysseus. But th identity of the Argonautic minstrel is no fixed in the tradition, and Orpheus himsel need not be so ancient. We cannot trace hin definitely earlier than the 6th century BC.

His other famous exploit was his descen to Hades to recover his wife – usually calle Eurydice – after she had been fatally bitte by a snake. Again it was his singing that wa important, enabling him to prevail upo Pluto and Persephone to make an exceptio and release their visitor. But (the stor usually proceeds) he failed to bring he safely back: he looked back at her befor they reached home, and the poor dear was a once compelled to return. This was a piec of magic, like others in myth and ritual that could only be accomplished with averte eyes. But Orpheus remained one of the few like Theseus, Hercules and Odysseus, wh penetrated to the land of the dead an returned to tell the tale.

As for his eventual death, one story was that Zeus struck him with lightning: a ambiguous fate, often the wages of sin, but sometimes the means of translation to a higher existence in Elysium or even heaven. The more widespread version, however was that for one reason or another he was



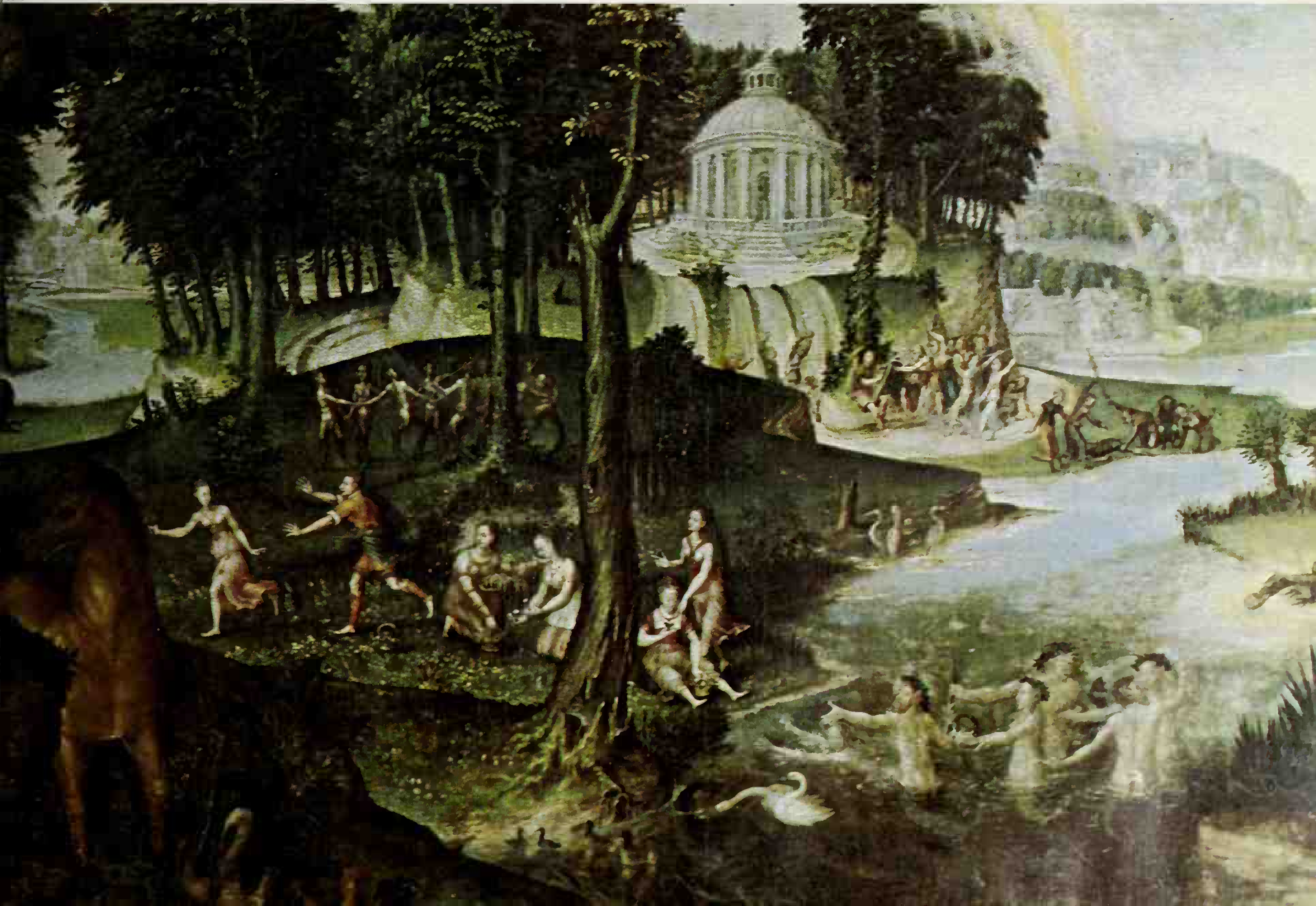
set upon by the Thracian Bacchants and torn imb from limb. Again, this is a typical heme. Orpheus is only one of a number of people (normally either young children, or men who interfere with the service of Dionysus) who are torn apart by Bacchants. But in his case there was a surprising sequel. His head, thrown into the River Hebrus, continued to sing. It was carried out to sea and across to Lesbos, where it was found on he shore still carolling away. It was installed n a chasm on the island, where it issued oracles to inquirers. Once more, a folktale element is involved, for there are several stories about murder victims whose severed heads retain the power of speech (see HEAD). We may say generally that the myths about Orpheus are of this sort, folktales that have attached themselves to a convenient hero. There seems to be no residue of historical memory, and in answer to the questions who Orpheus really was and when he lived, f he lived at all, we must confess that we have no notion.

Orphic Poems

The practice of foisting theological poems on Orpheus begins, so far as we can see, with Pythagoras and his early followers, about 500 BC. Pythagoras was an intellectual priest-prophet who claimed to be an incarnation of Apollo. His teaching combined a superstitious insistence on old religious precepts and taboos with the novel doctrine of transmigration of souls through different animal bodies and different regions of the universe; probably also a mystical reverence for numbers (see PYTHAGORAS). Writers in the 5th century speak of his 'making a selection' of certain writings, or specifically of his publishing under the name of Orpheus. We hear of rites which are 'called Orphic and Bacchic but are really Egyptian and Pythagorean'. We know the titles of several poems of metaphysical content, nominally by Orpheus but remembered as the work of early Pythagoreans called Brontinus, Zopyrus and Cercops, and we can see reflections of Pythagorean thought in their subject matter. The *Robe* may have developed a myth of Pherecydes (540 BC), for whom the earth's surface was a robe worn by the earth goddess after her marriage to Zeus the sky god. For Brontinus the weaving of the robe may have been more than a metaphor — an insight into the physical process by which vegetation spreads across the earth in spring.

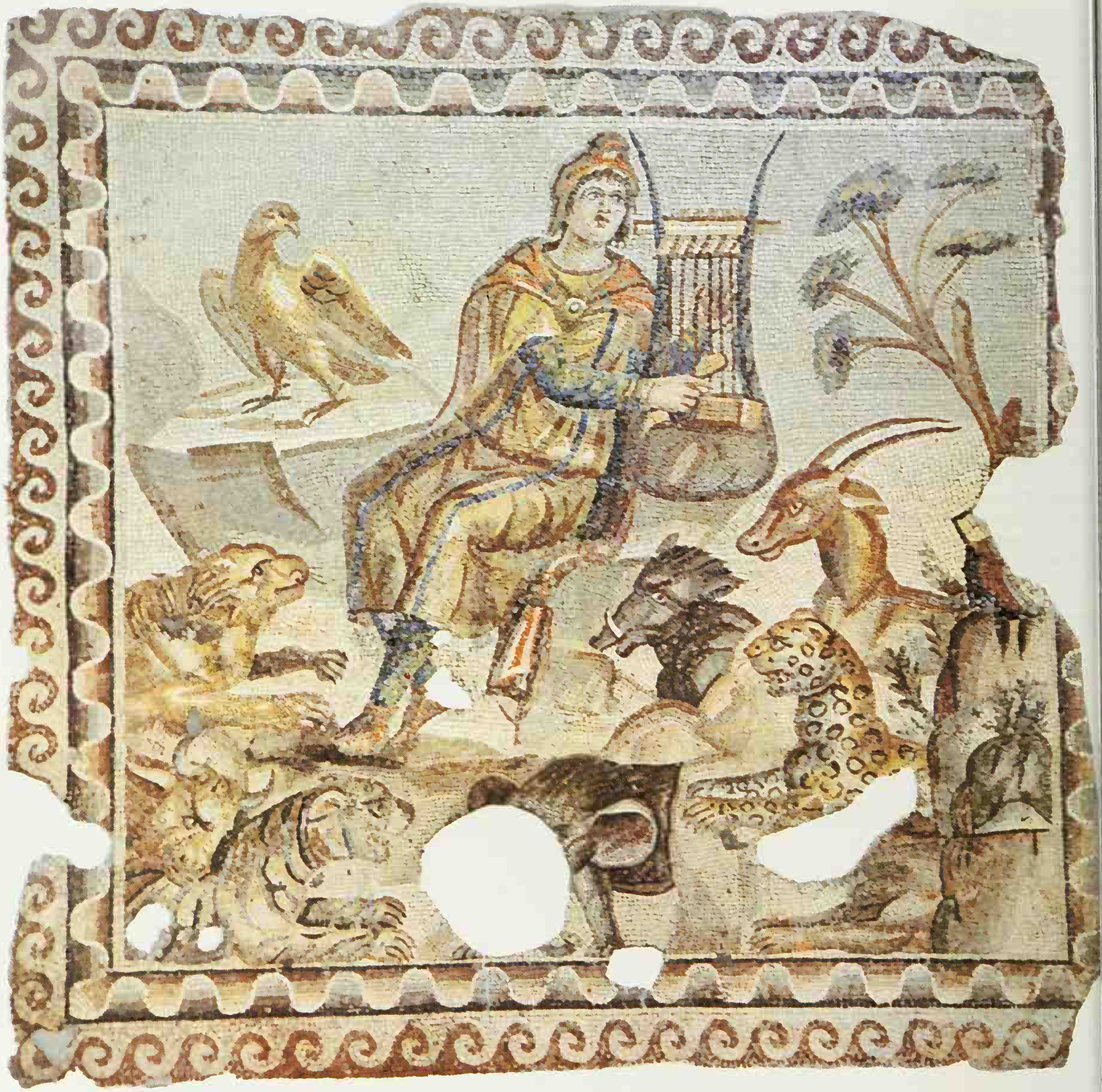
The *Net* must have been a rather similar poem. The knitting of the net illustrated the formation of a living creature, with its tissue built up loop by loop, its soul being the air captured in the interstices. Then there was the *Mixing Bowl*; the mixing process played an important part in cosmological theory of the time and the cosmic mixing bowl reappears in Plato. Apart from these metaphysical expositions, there was a *Descent to Hades*, probably a straightforward apocalypse in which Orpheus gave an account of his quest for Eurydice, and revealed to mankind the fate of souls in the other world.

In the second half of the 5th century we find Orpheus mentioned as an inventor of spells and incantations. But his principal gifts to mankind, according to Aristophanes, are 'sacraments, and abstention from bloodshed'. This implies a religious vegetarianism, a typically but by no means exclusively Pythagorean discipline. The sacraments referred to may include those of the Eleusinian Mysteries (see ELEUSIS), for it is not much later that we find Orpheus named as their founder. The hero of Euripides' *Hippolytus* (428 BC) has been to the Eleusinian Mysteries, he follows a vegetarian diet in his desire for purity and holiness, and he 'has Orpheus for his master, paying service to the vapourings of many writings'. A little later, Plato tells of people who persuade both private individuals and the greatest cities (surely a reference to Eleusis) to take sacraments that bring purification and release from sin, personal or inherited; they offer 'a throng of books, of Orpheus and Musaeus' (another mythical singer). The purified, it is said, feast with the gods for ever, while the rest lie in mud. In the next generation, Theophrastus notes it as a mark of the superstitious man that he takes his family every month to the 'Orpheus-ministers', who no doubt charged him a suitable fee for his salvation.



One of the favourite stories about Orpheus, he legendary Thracian singer, was that he made such beautiful music on his lyre that the creatures of the wild came and stood enraptured about him: by the Flemish painter Savéry, 17th century

Scala



It was such a man, perhaps, who took with him to the funeral pyre an allegorical commentary on an Orphic theogony, not far from Salonica: the scroll was only charred, and a few years ago it came to light, the oldest surviving Greek papyrus and the only one found in Greece itself. Full publication of the text is impatiently awaited. To the same period, the late 4th century, belongs the oldest of the famous gold tablets, which turn up in tombs in widely separate places (Thessaly, Crete, Italy) down to the 2nd century AD. Although they say nothing of Orpheus, they throw light on that desire for personal salvation which often did take Orpheus for its evangelist. They are reminders to the soul of what to do and say in the other world; they are mainly in verse. The longest reads: 'Now you will find to the left of the halls of Hades a spring, and beside it a white cypress standing. Do not approach this spring. You will find on the other side cool water flowing from the Lake of Recollection; but there are guards before it. Say "I am a child of Earth and Sky, of heavenly race, you know it well: but I am parched with thirst, I perish. Give me, quickly, the cool water from the Lake of Recollection." And they shall give you to drink from the holy spring, and after that you shall enter the kingdom of the Heroes.' There are similarities to the *Book of the Dead* here, and many scholars admit an Egyptian influence.

But we must return to Plato, for only one side of his Orpheus has been described. He mentions Orpheus more often than any earlier writer, and this may not be unconnected with the fact that he was much influenced by Pythagoreanism. A Pythagorean origin should perhaps be posited for the Orphic theogony that he and presently Aristotle mention. (It is not yet clear whether it was the same as the theogony of the Salonica papyrus.) Like the old theogony of Hesiod, it gave a genealogy of the gods, interspersed with narrative episodes. Its content seems not to have been startlingly different from Hesiod. But we cannot tell how it ended; and the ending will have been the important part, containing a religious message to which the genealogy merely served as a background. If it was Pythagorean, it may have set out the octrine of transmigration, which Plato nows as an 'ancient account' told by 'godly' oets. He also mentions 'ancient sacred ccounts' which tell of penalties imposed on ouls by judges; and the imprisonment of he soul in a body as a punishment is linked ith the name of Orpheus.

he Apparition

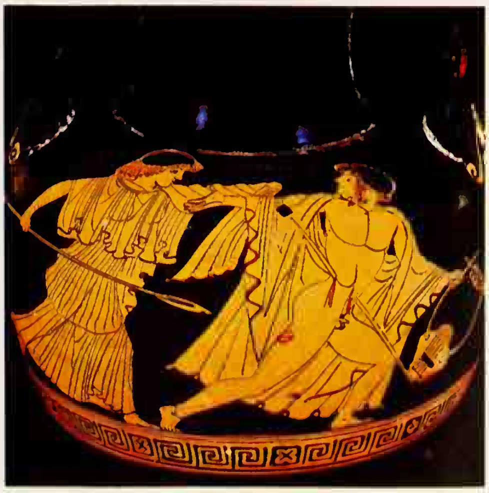
he theogony had a long and varied areer. First, it was chosen as the opening oem of the Epic Cycle, an artificial chain f epic poems spanning the whole of egendary history, and this involved certain lterations and omissions. Secondly, at east one rival Orphic theogony appeared, otally different in content. It features naging Time, portrayed as a winged erpent, with extra heads of a bull, lion and od, coiled with a female counterpart, estiny. Time produces Light, Darkness and haos, and in the middle a shining egg. rom it a splendid creature hatches, with olden wings, four eyes and horns, various nimal heads, and the organs of both sexes. e has many names: Zeus, Pan, Dionysus, ros, Firstborn, Phanes ('Apparition'), and nore obscurely Erikepaios. The world is lled with radiance at his appearance, but e himself is invisible except to Night. He nates with her as well as with his own female arts, producing heaven and earth, and ther gods, and so our world takes shape. his extraordinary poem is thoroughly riental in inspiration, having its closest arallels in Iranian theology, and was robably composed in the East in the 3rd entury BC.

There were now two or three theogonies y Orpheus in circulation, telling very diferent stories. The conflict was resolved oon after 100 BC, when a redactor forcibly onflated them, together with whatever ther 'Orphic' material came to hand. There as a tale that Homer's poems had had to e reconstructed after his death from hapsodies' (the Greek word means recitaons) which he had left behind in different owns. So it was pretended that the new pic had been constituted from Rhapsodies f Orpheus, 24 of them as in the *Iliad* and *dyssey*.

Instead of being the permanent ruler of he world, Phanes was now the first of six ivine kings. He was no longer Zeus and ionysus: they were the fifth and sixth ings, born long after him. Yet Zeus emained the creator of the world, for he wallowed Phanes and the universe with im, and then produced it all over again. he climax of the complicated narrative ame when Dionysus was set on the throne at the age of six. The Titans (see CRONUS), diverting him with a curious assortment of ritual objects, cut him into seven pieces, which they boiled and tasted. But Apollo, by burying the pieces, was able to restore the child to health; the Titans were blasted with thunderbolts, and from the dirty smoke that this produced, man was created. His soul is immortal: after death it is judged, spends 300 years in pleasant or nasty surroundings, and is then reborn in a new body. But men aim to achieve release from this round of ills, and Dionysus and Persephone are appointed to help them, if they perform the correct sacrifices and purification rites.

The dissection and cooking of Dionysus must be compared with the myths of Bacchants tearing people apart, and seems to be a mythical reflection of a procedure of animal sacrifice. We first hear of the death of the god as a local legend from Delphi in the early 3rd century BC. It is presupposed in a broken papyrus of about 220 BC which contains notes for a sacrificial ritual and prayers for personal salvation addressed to Demeter, Persephone and Erikepaios (here probably a name of Dionysus). This reveals a cult in Greek Egypt very like what we would have to postulate, besides the rival theogonies described, to account for the contents of the Rhapsodies. It is noteworthy that Ptolemy IV, who ruled Egypt from 222 to 205, was a great devotee of Dionysus and claimed descent from him. He issued an edict that all who held Dionysiac sacraments must register in Alexandria, state who they had learnt their ceremonies from, and deliver a signed copy of their holy story. Various 'Orphic' poems must have been collected as a result.

British Museum/Michael Holford


British Museum

eft Animals entranced by Orpheus: mosaic rom a Roman villa at Tarsus **Right** The dying)rpheus, from a Greek vase: according to one tory, Zeus struck him with lightning **Above ight** Amulet case and chain with one of the amous gold tablets, this one found in southern taly. These tablets were placed in tombs and ave the soul instructions about what to do in he other world: though they do not mention)rpheus, 'they throw light on that desire for ersonal salvation which often did take)rpheus for its evangelist'

'Orphic' Cults

The Pythagoreans still had shares in the name of Orpheus. As their interests spread, in the last centuries before Christ, to subjects like medicine, astrology and divination, their Orpheus modified his poetic output accordingly. Varro (116–27 BC) knew a poem called the *Lyre*, said to be about summoning up souls, and perhaps based on an analogy between the seven strings of Orpheus' lyre and the seven planetary spheres through which, in post-Platonic speculation, the soul ascended to heaven. The elder Pliny (23–79 AD) more than once cites Orpheus as an authority on herbs, a topic which Pythagorean writers were investigating by 50 BC at the latest.

The fact that Orpheus was adopted as the founder of the Eleusinian Mysteries should mean that he composed the sacred poetry, and a chronicle of 264 BC probably named him as the author of a cult poem on the rape of Persephone. In fact we possess such a poem, among the hymns ascribed to Homer, and parts of it are quoted as 'Orpheus' in a papyrus of the 1st century BC. The practice of attributing to Orpheus poems composed for local cults became increasingly prevalent in the Hellenistic period and under the Roman Empire. As early as 320 BC he is the founder of Dionysus-mysteries. Later we find him linked with cults in Aegina, Sparta and Phrygia. We hear of a *Corybanticum* and of *Enthronements for the Divine Mother*, both belonging to rites in which initiates in the service of the Great Mother (see CORYBANTES; CYBELE) were set on a throne and danced round by the others. We hear of a *Girding Song* (in some cults, the initiate put on a special girdle); *Verses for sacred investiture*; *Verses for founding a shrine*; *Verses for naming*; *Cosmic invocations*; *For Salvation*; *Oaths*. There must have been much more. One specimen of 'Orphic' cult poetry has come down to us intact: a collection of 87 hymns, very homogeneous in style and probably the work of a single author in the 2nd or 3rd century AD. He refers to himself as Orpheus, and alludes to the Rhapsodies. The hymns were apparently used by members of a private religious society who met at night in a house somewhere in west Asia Minor and prayed to all the gods they could think of, to the light of torches and the fragrance of eight varieties of incense. Occasionally their ceremonial extended to a libation of milk. Dionysus is prominent, being the recipient, under different titles, of eight hymns. We get a picture of cheerful and inexpensive dabbling in religion by a literary-minded circle.

The tradition of sub-scientific Orphica continued concurrently. There is record of a *Book of Eighty Gems* (on the magic properties of stones), various astrological poems, and directions for divination from birds, dreams, eggs, entrails and earthquakes. Two compositions that stand apart from the rest are the *Testament*, possibly a

Jewish effort, in which Orpheus repudiated his earlier teachings and acknowledged a single God, and the *Argonautica*, a short and derivative epic in which Orpheus described his participation in Jason's expedition. The poem is hardly earlier and perhaps later than the 4th century AD. It was consciously designed as an addition to an already bulky corpus of Orphic literature, for Orpheus begins by reviewing his previous compositions. He summarizes part of the Rhapsodies, and mentions among other things Corybantic rites, Demeter's search for Persephone, cults of Lemnos, Samothrace, Cyprus, and of Osiris in Egypt; poems on astrology, divination, purification, propitiation of gods and departed spirits, and an eye-witness account of the underworld.

Such was Orphic literature at the time: a vast hotch-potch. But pride of place is given to the Rhapsodies; and Dionysus is the god with whom Orpheus is most firmly associated in cult. The reason is perhaps simply that the Dionysiac mysteries were more popular than any other. If it had fallen to a Greek god to conquer Europe, it would have been Dionysus; and the Orphic Rhapsodies would have been our Bible. Among our Apocrypha might have been the *Bacchica*, a late poem which reidentified Dionysus with Zeus and Phanes, holding all these names to be titles of the divine Sun. But for the Neoplatonist philosophers of the 5th and 6th centuries, 'Orpheus' meant primarily the Rhapsodies. They discussed the poem in seminars and written commentaries, quoted it constantly, and misunderstood it completely, finding in it an allegorical exposition of their own vapid metaphysics. In antiquity as in modern times, Orpheus was all things to all men.

M. L. WEST

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For the Egyptians Osiris was both saviour and judge; murdered by Seth he was raised to life again and became god of the underworld. His royal character was designed to effect the resurrection of the dead pharaoh who was ritually assimilated to Osiris

OSIRIS

THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN god Osiris is one of the most interesting and significant deities known to historians of religions. He is also one of the oldest gods of whom records survive; and he may rightly claim to have been worshipped longer than any other god – his cult was already well established by 2400 BC, and it continued until the forcible suppression of paganism, in favour of Christianity, in the 4th century AD.

Because Osiris was so important to them and they were so familiar with his myth or legend, the Egyptians never seem to have written a formal account of their beliefs about him. Their literature, both sacred and secular, is replete with references and allusions to him, and he is one of the figures most abundantly portrayed in their art. Yet it was left to the Greek writers Diodorus Siculus, in the 1st century BC, and Plutarch, in the following century, to provide posterity with descriptive accounts of this ancient Egyptian god, who was still a potent figure in their day. Their accounts must, inevitably, be treated with much caution; for it is unlikely that they had any direct access to Egyptian records, and they were concerned to rationalize and philosophize what they had learned from their Egyptian guides and interpreters. However, there is reason to think that they did preserve some authentic traditions, and their accounts are significant as evidence of what Osiris had come to mean to Graeco-Roman society more than 2000 years after he first appears in Egyptian records.

In the Pyramid Texts (see BOOK OF THE DEAD), which are concerned with the afterlife of the pharaohs of the 5th and 6th Dynasties, Osiris plays a strange but vital role in the mortuary ritual. Among its rubrics and spells, reference is made to his murder and the finding of his body: 'Isis comes and Nephthys . . . They find Osiris, as his brother Set laid him low in Nedjet.' Nedjet in historical times was located near Abydos, in Upper Egypt, which was the chief sanctuary of Osiris. In another text of about the same period (2400 BC) there is reference to the drowning of Osiris in the River Nile at Memphis, the ancient capital of Egypt. There are references also in other texts to the casting of Osiris's body into the Nile or to finding it upon its banks. The two traditions are not mutually exclusive; but what is consistently attested throughout all Egyptian records is that Seth murdered Osiris.

Raised by Magical Chants

The Egyptian evidence is also agreed that the corpse of Osiris was found by Isis (see ISIS) and Nephthys, who either prevented its decomposition or restored it when decomposed by various acts of embalmment. After effecting the preservation of his body, the dead Osiris was then raised to life again. Various deities are associated in the texts and iconography with this resurrection, namely, Isis and Nephthys, Atum-Re, Anubis and Horus (see EGYPT). The means by which it was effected varies. Generally it would seem that magical incantation was envisaged to resurrect the god. Sometimes a more practical way was imagined, as in depictions showing Isis and Nephthys fanning air into the inanimate Osiris with the falcon wings attached to their arms.

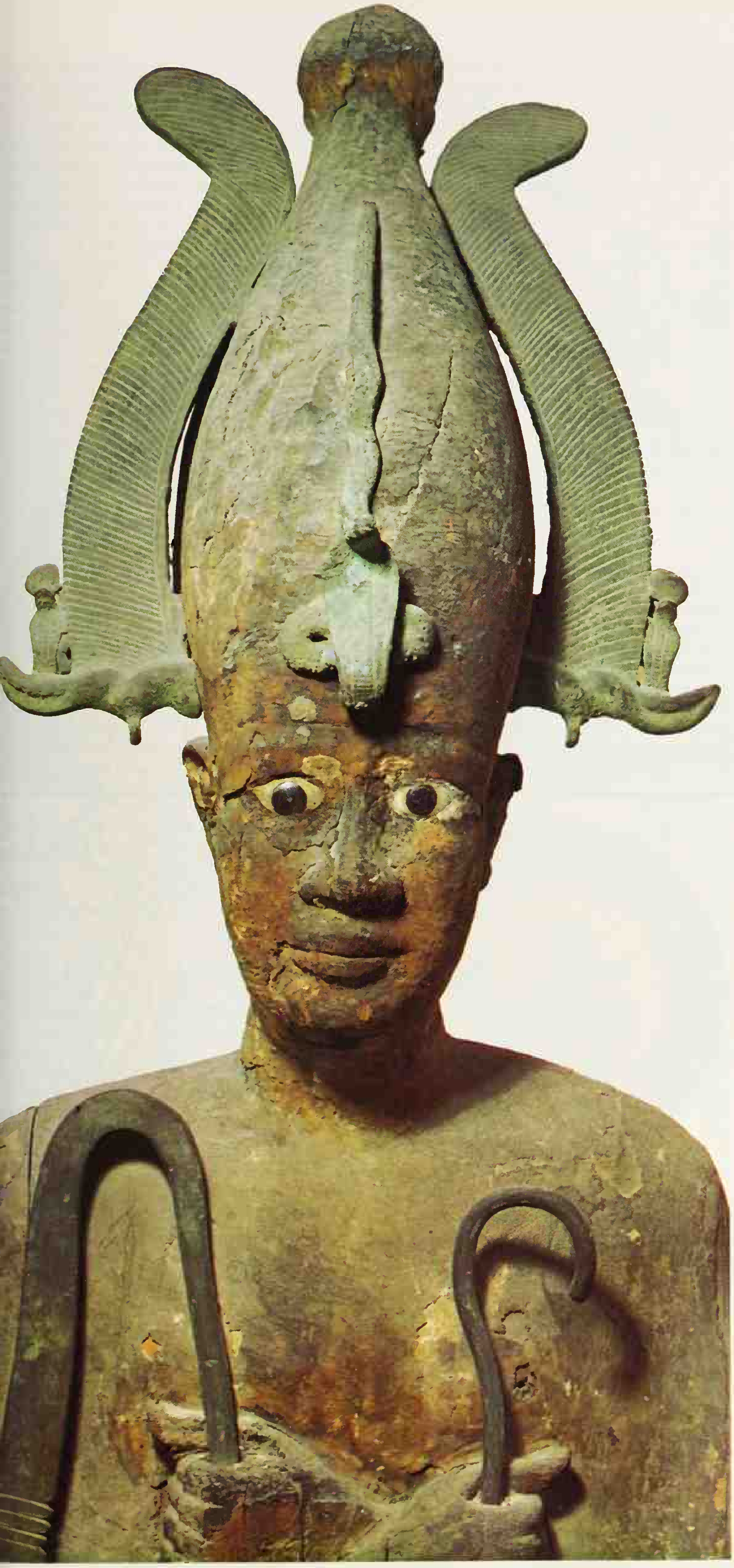
Although he was thus raised to life again, Osiris did not resume his earthly life in Egypt where, as the texts indicate, he had been a king. Instead, his cause against his murderer Seth was tried before a tribunal of the gods of Heliopolis. The verdict was concise 'Guilty is Set; Osiris is just.' Osiris then became 'the lord of the West', the underworld or realm of the dead.

The legend of Osiris also involves a number of other divine figures. Isis is both the wife and sister of Osiris. Nephthys, her sister, is the consort of Seth, who is represented as both the brother and murderer of Osiris. Horus was regarded as the posthumously begotten son of Osiris (see HORUS). Grown to man's estate, he is represented as fighting with Seth to avenge his father and secure his patrimony. He is also described, inconsistently with his posthumous birth, as performing various mortuary offices for his father, including the ceremony of 'Opening the Mouth' (see MUMMIFICATION).

Such, then, is the story of Osiris as it can be reconstructed from Egyptian texts. The versions of Diodorus Siculus and Plutarch are fuller narrative accounts, composed according to contemporary Graeco-Roman taste; but they preserve some outline of the basic pattern of the Egyptian original. Diodorus presents Osiris as an ancient king who taught the Egyptians the arts of civilized living, including agriculture – Isis had discovered the use of wheat and barley, which had hitherto grown wild. He is murdered by his brother Typhon (Seth is here identified with an evil monster of Greek mythology), who divided his body into 26 pieces, which he gave to his followers in order to implicate them in his crime. The death of Osiris is avenged by Isis and Horus, who slay Typhon. Isis recovers the parts of her husband's body, except the phallus, and buries them secretly. In order to promote the worship of Osiris, she then made exact replicas of his body and entrusted them severally to colleges of priests to bury in their local centres – this is obviously an attempt to explain the fact that several places in Egypt claimed to have the tomb or some relic of Osiris. After reigning for many years, Isis died and was deified. Memphis claimed to have her tomb; but many believed that both Osiris and Isis were buried in the island of Philae in Upper Egypt. This account by Diodorus shows no insight into the real nature of the deity or his place in Egyptian religion.

Treachery at a Banquet

According to Plutarch, Osiris was also a king who civilized both the Egyptians and the rest of mankind; he was identified by the Greeks with their god Dionysus (see DIONYSUS). After the return of Osiris from his world travel, Seth planned his death with the help of 72 fellow-conspirators. Having secretly measured the body of Osiris, Seth made a beautiful chest, richly decorated, exactly to its dimensions. Then, at a banquet to which Osiris was invited, he offered to give the chest to any guest whom it fitted. When Osiris laid himself within it, Seth slammed the lid, and secured it fast. The chest was thrown into the River Nile, carried to the sea, and drifted to Byblos, on the Phoenician coast. It came to rest on the shore, and a lovely tree grew up and enclosed it. The tree's size and beauty caused the King of



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Byblos to cut it down and use it as a pillar of his palace.

The sorrowing Isis, who had long been seeking her husband's body, eventually located it, and by a display of magical power, obtained it from the King of Byblos and brought it back to Egypt. There it was discovered by Seth, who cut it into 14 pieces and scattered the parts throughout the land. Isis patiently searched for the parts, burying each where it was found – another explanation of the many burial places of Osiris in Egypt. The phallus was not found; it had been devoured by a fish that became tabu to the Egyptians. Osiris then emerged from the underworld, to train and equip his son Horus to punish Seth. Horus conquered Seth after a hard struggle, and his legitimacy, questioned by Seth, was vindicated by the gods. Isis conceived a son called Harpocrates by her dead husband – Plutarch here mistakes one of the Greek names ('Harpocrates', derived from the Egyptian 'Horus the child') of Horus for another deity. Plutarch also regarded Osiris and Isis as demigods who, because of their virtue, were translated into gods.

These Greek versions are evidence of the fascination that Osiris had for Graeco-Roman society. But although Egyptologists today are better placed to evaluate the ancient god than the Greek men of learning, many problems still remain unsolved.

The Mighty One

The Pyramid Texts show that the kings of Egypt were associated with Osiris in death. This association was clearly not a novel one, and it must have extended far back into the past, possibly into the pre-dynastic period. The name 'Osiris' has been the subject of much study, in the hope that it might provide a clue to the deity's origin, but none of the many interpretations that have been offered has yet been generally accepted. The most recent suggestion, which has much to commend it, is that the name meant originally 'the Mighty One'. Equally obscure is the problem of the original location of the cult of Osiris. Busiris (from an Egyptian word meaning 'House of Osiris') in the eastern Delta of the Nile was an ancient cult centre of Osiris, but the local deity there was Anzeti. However, since Osiris is invariably depicted wearing the tall white crown of Upper Egypt, it would seem that he had originated from that province.

The royal aspect or character of the god is presented in his traditional iconography; besides the white crown, he holds the symbols of Egyptian royalty – the crook and flail. The image, however, is a curious compromise between a living and a dead king. For the body of Osiris is represented in the form of a mummy, yet the face and head are free of mummy wrappings and the hands protrude from the wrappings and firmly grasp the royal insignia.

The association of the pharaoh with

Osiris 'may rightly claim to have been worshipped longer than any other god': this statue shows him wearing the white crown of Egypt and holding the royal symbols of crook and flail

Osiris in death, which constitutes one of the most notable themes of the Pyramid Texts, was designed to effect the resurrection of the dead king. It was based on the principle of imitative magic, the dead king being ritually assimilated to Osiris. The whole drama of the mortuary ritual was, in fact, modelled on that of the legend of the death and resurrection of Osiris. In the Pyramid Texts the subject was the dead king; but gradually the royal mortuary ritual was democratized, so that by the New Kingdom all persons who could afford the expense could hope for revivification through ritual assimilation to Osiris.

Because of his connection with the fundamental mysteries of death and the afterlife, Osiris became the most significant of the gods for the Egyptians. At Abydos, the chief centre of his cult, a dramatic presentation of his death and resurrection was periodically performed. Osiris was also connected with the cult of the Apis bull, from which was derived his transformation into Serapis, the great deity of Hellenized Egypt, whose worship was promoted by King Ptolemy I (304–282 BC) as part of his policy to unite his Greek and Egyptian subjects. In the form of a Mystery religion, the cult of Isis and Osiris spread far into the Roman Empire; and the famous *Golden Ass* of Apuleius (2nd century AD) attests to the power of its appeal – although Isis, as the great compassionate goddess of the universe, tended to dominate the attention of the devotees, leaving Osiris a somewhat background figure invested in deep mystery.

The ever-increasing importance of Osiris to the Egyptians resulted in his association with natural phenomena, especially with the growth of corn and the fructifying waters of the Nile. This has led to his identification as a vegetation deity of the dying-rising type by many scholars, pre-eminently by Sir James G. Frazer (see DYING GOD; VEGETATION SPIRITS). The identification appears to be strikingly confirmed by the custom of placing in tombs moist earth shaped in the form of Osiris: the seed sown in it quickly sprouted in the dark warmth, thus symbolizing new life rising from the dead Osiris, and perhaps facilitating the resurrection of the dead person buried in the tomb. However, although a fertility role was certainly assigned to him, Osiris's character of a vegetation god was later and subordinate to his mortuary significance.

Judge and Redeemer

Another role which Osiris acquired was that of judge of the dead; but it was not until the New Kingdom that he appears in this guise, and it is not clear how he came to acquire it. In the Book of the Dead Osiris is presented as exercising his fateful office in two different ways: the dead are directed to make their first 'Declaration of Innocence' to him; and he presides at the weighing of the soul (see JUDGEMENT OF THE DEAD). The role of judge of the dead logically contradicted that of saviour of the dead which Osiris had in the mortuary ritual. This discrepancy is extremely interesting, because a similar one occurs in Christianity, where Christ is both saviour and judge. The cause, however, is not the same in each case: Osiris probably came to be regarded as the judge of the dead because he ruled the land of the dead; the diverse roles of Christ derived from the Pauline and Jerusalem traditions that were eventually fused together in orthodox Christology (see PAUL).

It is difficult for us today to appreciate what the ancient Egyptians felt when they looked on the image of Osiris. But some insight is perhaps given, if we bear in mind that the image was that of a divine hero who had suffered and died, and then rose from the dead. Thus Osiris was not some remote transcendent deity such as Re, the sun god, but one who had endured the grim ordeal that awaited all men. In his image, moreover, the Egyptian devotees saw also the promise of their own resurrection from death and eternal life in the realm of Osiris. Phenomenologically, if not historically, Osiris was thus a prototype of Christ.

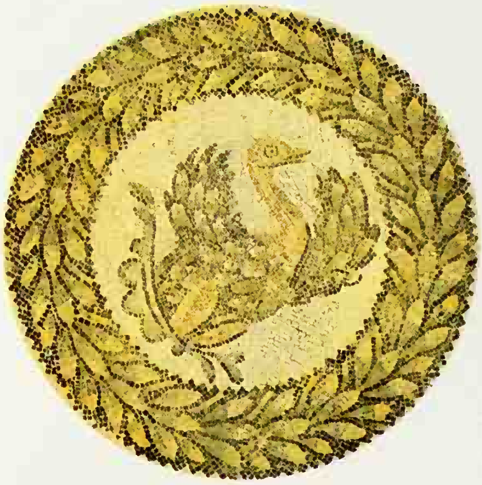
S. G. F. BRANDON

FURTHER READING: E. A. W. Budge, *Osiris and the Egyptian Resurrection* 2 vols. (Dover, 1973); S. G. F. Brandon ed., *The Saviour God* (Greenwood Press, 1980); J. G. Griffiths, *The Origins of Osiris* (Argonaut); E. Otto, *Egyptian Art and the Cults of Osiris and Amon* (Abrams, 1967).

OSTRICH

IT WAS PROBABLY as a source of food that the ostrich first aroused man's interest, for its eggs have been eaten since very early times. A North African rock engraving of the Stone Age depicts a hunter aiming an arrow at an ostrich, while frescoes in Egyptian tombs show the bird's plumes being used for personal decoration. Greek and Roman writers refer to the ostrich, but in Europe traditional lore concerning it mainly sprang from the biblical allusions which credited it with being forgetful, stupid and cruel (Job 39.13–17; Lamentations 4.3). As few Europeans until recent times had opportunities to observe the behaviour of the bird in the wild, there was ample opportunities for the little that was recorded to be misunderstood.

Biblical writers incorrectly inferred that the ostrich neglected its young, partly from the bird's habit of retreating when approached, and also because ostriches in the Near East sometimes left their eggs covered with sand to be kept warm by the sun's heat. The notion that the bird did not brood, which dates from at least as far back as the 2nd century, led to the belief that it hatched its eggs by gazing at them intently. This belief was repeated by writers down the centuries, including Vincent of Beauvais and Montaigne, and the ostrich egg thus became a symbol of single-minded devotion. In present-day Greek churches an ostrich egg suspended in a conspicuous position is a reminder to the worshipper to focus his thoughts and prayers. The moral was drawn that as the ostrich leaves the eggs so the hermit retires from worldly involvements.


Sonia Halliday

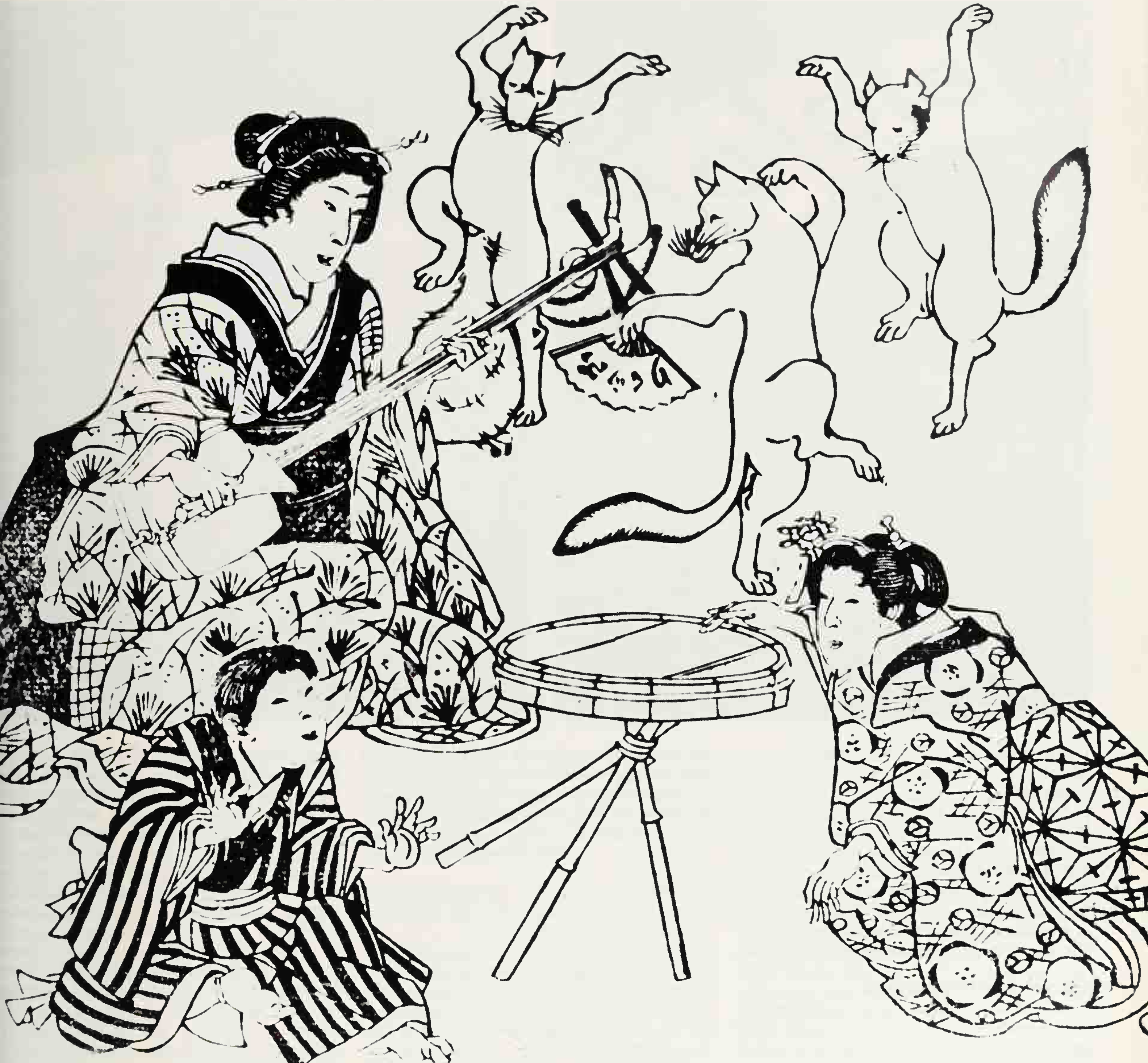
Christ's entry into Jerusalem: from a 14th-century manuscript (*above*), and from a wall painting in a Cyprus church (*facing page*). The palm was traditionally one of the four woods from which the cross was made

The belief that the bird consumes hard, inedible objects is also of long standing. Pliny said the ostrich could digest anything, but Aelian, who was better informed, stated that it kept pebbles in its gizzard. Rabbinic writers commented that it ate glass. An early Christian document (*Physiologus*) remarks that the ostrich eats glowing iron because 'his nature is very cold', and the poet John Skelton (c 1460–1529) mentions that the bird will eat a horseshoe. In *Henry VI*, Part 2, Jack Cade blusters: 'I'll make thee eat iron like an ostrich.' Living in unnatural conditions ostriches will indeed swallow incongruous objects; thus observed fact was exaggerated into fantasy.

Among the fanciful ideas about ostriches given currency by writers of the 15th and 16th centuries were that these birds terrified horses by flapping their wings, and that underneath the wings there was a small bone with which they pricked themselves when provoked to anger. Such ideas may have arisen from observations of these strange birds flapping their short wings as they ran away.

For some reason the idea arose that the ostrich is deaf as well as silly. In Philemon Holland's translation of Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* (1602), we read: 'But the veriest fools they be of all others; – for as high as the rest of their body is, yet if they thrust their head and neck once into any shrub or bush, and get it hidden, they think then they are safe enough, and that no man seeth them.' Hence the proverbial ostrich, symbolical of stupidity and an inability to face realities. No doubt the belief arose from ostriches being seen with heads down feeding before they became alarmed.

The belief, mentioned by Aristotle, that ostriches lay more eggs than any other bird was based on the finding of large clutches. As many as 60 have been recorded but the ostrich is polygamous and several may lay in one nest.



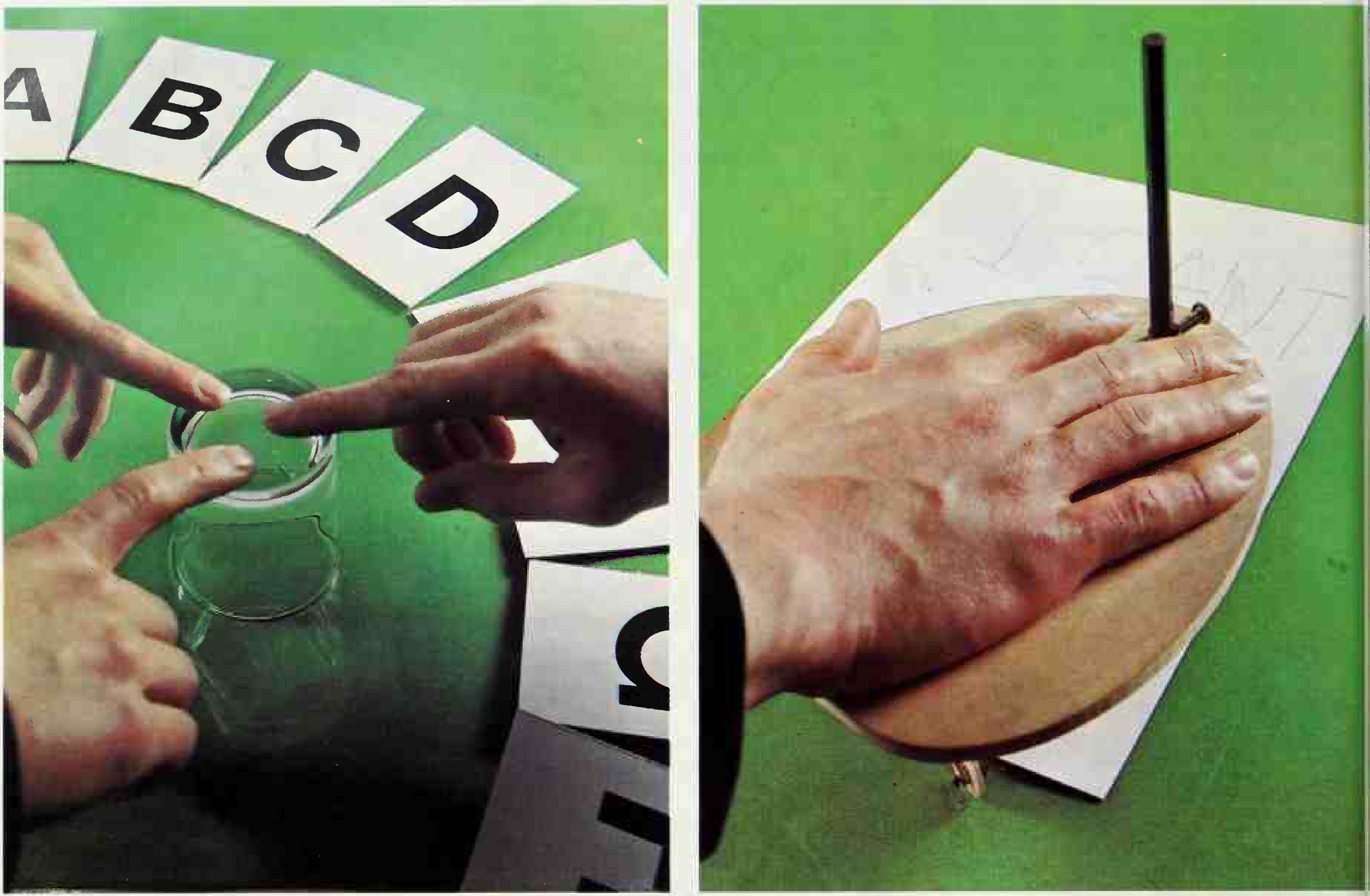
lthough the messages that 'come through' the uija board can often be traced to the performers' ubconscious, there are cases when they appear o emanate from some source which is not so ar recognized by orthodox science

Interest in the messages produced by table tilting, ouija boards or planchette, and the tendency to believe that they come from the spirit world, are not confined to the West: in this Japanese print fox spirits are communicating with human beings by tilting a table

OUIJA BOARDS

THE NAME OUIJA derives from the French nd German words for 'yes', *oui* and *ja*. A ouija board is a flat polished sheet of wood, bout 18 inches by 12, which has the lphabet written in a wide half moon along ts longer side. On top of this board is placed a much smaller one, heart-shaped and mounted on tiny castors which enable it to slide about. If one or more persons place their finger tips lightly on the smaller board, in many cases it will slide, without being consciously pushed, so that the apex of the heart points from letter to letter, making words or even sentences which are not expected by the performers. Sometimes, though not often, information comes to them which is not at the time known to their conscious minds, though it may have been known to one or more of them in the past and then forgotten. Very occasionally it seems not to have been known to any of them at all.

One variant of the ouija board is called a planchette. In this case a pencil is attached to the apex of the heart-shaped pointer and a blank sheet of paper is placed on the larger board. Again, this sometimes but not always results in the pencil moving about without being consciously pushed, and what it writes may range from aimless marks to whole sentences and even long stories. But as a rule its productions do not make much sense. A second variant of a ouija board may be made by cutting out the letters of the alphabet and setting them in a circle on a polished table. If a wine glass or smooth rimmed tumbler is then placed



The simplest form of ouija board, an upturned glass in the centre of a circle of letters (*left*), and a planchette (*right*): both devices seem to open up 'shortcuts from subconscious to conscious' and can be upsetting, embarrassing or frightening if 'censored' material comes through

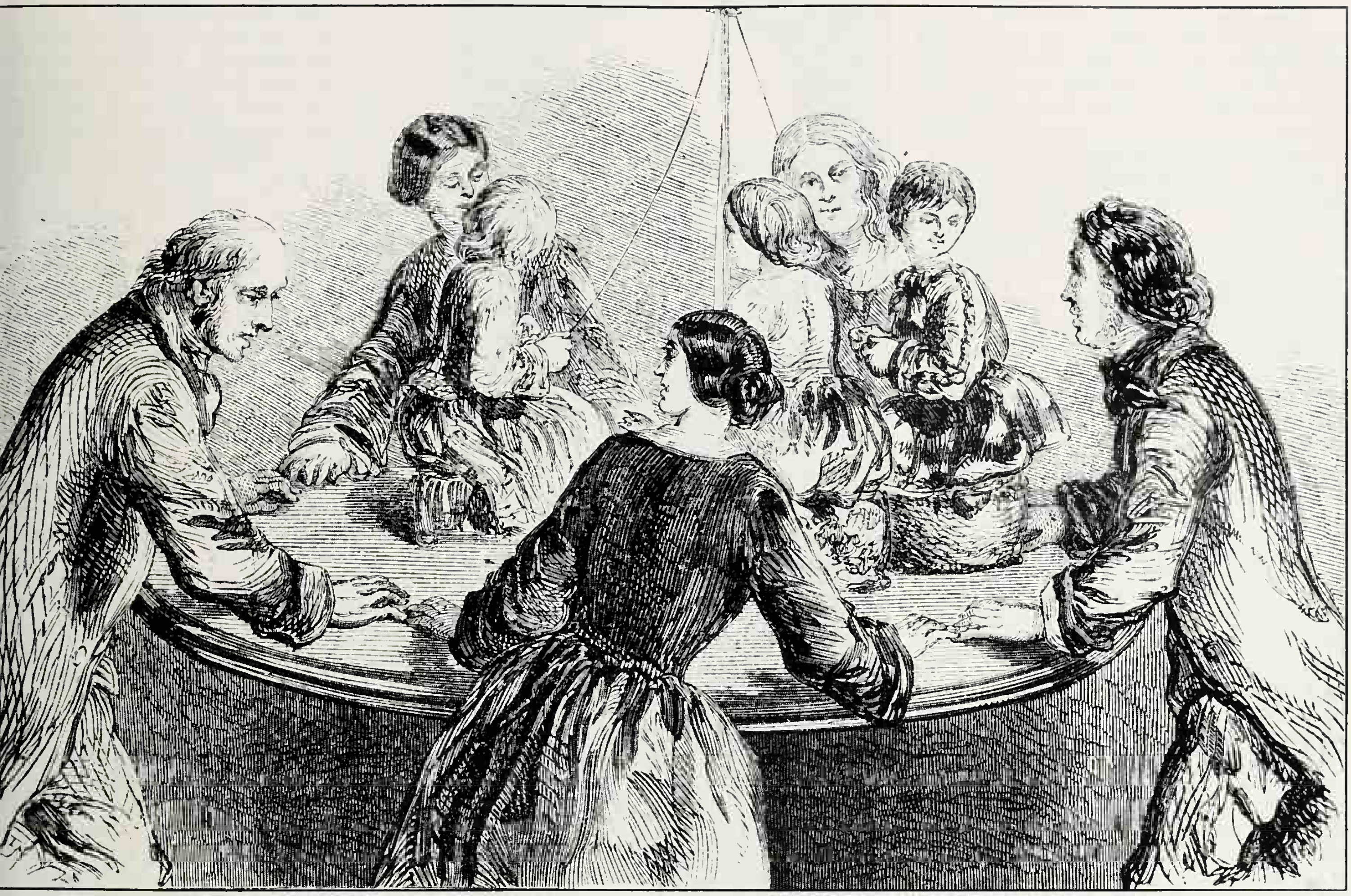
upside down within the circle and the fingers of one or more persons lightly rested upon it (preferably one finger, per hand, per person) it will sometimes slide from letter to letter forming words in the same manner as the heart-shaped pointer. Why such devices can be made to function by some people and not by others is not known. It may be a matter of the psychological attitude of the performers, or – a wild speculation – the cause might even be an electrical one.

Shortcut to the Surface

Table tilting – or tipping, or turning, as it is sometimes called – works on the same general principle as a ouija board although it is slower and more laborious. If one or more persons place their fingers on a table, preferably a small circular one on a three-footed pedestal, on some occasions, which cannot be predicted in advance, it will tip up and tap a foot without being consciously pushed by any of the performers. As a rule Spiritualists make use of a code by which it can answer questions – one tap for 'yes', two for 'uncertain' and three for 'no'. Or letters of the alphabet may be recited and responded to by taps – and so on. Such activities are still popular in Spiritualistic circles, and they were extremely so, even among the sophisticated, in the 19th century. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert are on record as having once tilted a table. In those days the entities which purported to communicate through the board or table were widely assumed to be what they claimed to be, discarnate spirits, but nowadays modern psychology has produced a rival source nearer at hand – the subconscious of one or more of the performers.

It is now for the most part accepted that much mental and emotional activity in the human psyche takes place beyond the threshold of consciousness. Glimpses of it can be seen in dreams and its results may also come to the surface unexpectedly, 'out of the blue', and can range from idealistic and creative ideas at one end to apparently motiveless destructive impulses at the other. It seems, in fact, as if those hidden areas contain all kinds of material, some of it 'higher' in quality than the conscious self, some of it 'lower'. Psychoanalysis has also emphasized that memories of distressing events can be repressed into those areas because they are too painful to be faced by the conscious self, and that goes too for desires which do not fit into the pattern of life ordained by that self. A natural conclusion from this is that the highway from subconscious to conscious may sometimes be blocked, that there may be some sort of psychological censorship. The symbolic nature of many dreams hints at such censorship.

There are certain procedures which seem to open up what may be called shortcuts from subconscious to conscious, and by means of these censored material is sometimes able to get through. Such procedures have been given the blanket name of automatisms, since what they produce has not been consciously willed or even known in advance and they often seem to involve some degree of dissociation, however slight. One form of automatism is trance mediumship; another is automatic writing and even automatic speech uttered in a less than trance state – for occasionally an individual will make statements or, say, preach a sermon, without the motivation coming from his conscious self, but still without that self being entirely in abeyance (see AUTOMATIC ART; MEDIUMS). Ouija board conversations, planchette writing and table-tipping are usually practised by several persons at a time and may then be called collective automatisms; these have the advantage that each participant can assume that the motive force comes from, or through, one of the others and that he himself is free from responsibility for what is said. In this context it is of interest that in most traditional attempts to provide information acquired through ESP even the individual sensitive uses some kind of procedure which implies that the information is being mediated to him through some outside source such, for instance, as a medium's control, a possessing god, a crystal, tea-leaves, hands, bones, a pendulum, a divining rod or automatically written messages which claim to come from a discarnate entity. To believe in any such procedure may be of



'All the world is much interested – not to say excited – with the newly-developed force as manifested in table moving': illustration to an article in *The Illustrated Magazine of Art*, 1854, implying that even the children's weight will not prevent the table from moving

enuine help to the performer for several easons: it frees him from responsibility for hat is said – he is only the transmitter; reduces the analytical conscious mind to passive role, hence its activity is less kely to blur faint intimations that may well p from beyond the threshold; and it may lso tend to encourage slight dissociation hich appears to facilitate the emergence f subconscious material.

The following examples may help to ndicate various sources from which material btained through the ouija board and table-ipping type of automatism seems to come. he first case is one in which conscious nd subconscious wishes apparently corres-onded, but even so, the material was pro-uced in an intriguingly oblique manner, ne which almost suggested that the sub-onscious of one or both performers was ntertaining itself at the expense of their onscious selves. Theodora Bosanquet, at hat time literary editor of *Time and Tide*, nd I were trying to get some first-hand nowledge of automatisms by working a uija board together once a week. We could rust each other not to cheat by pushing the ointer consciously and we assumed that hat it wrote came from her subconscious r mine, though we did not rule out subcon-cious telepathic collaboration. We did not ake very seriously the Spiritualist idea that he board's remarks came from a discarnate ntity as they purported to do, although if he conversation was to flow at all naturally t was essential to dramatize that one was alking to a person rather than to a piece of wood. Miss Bosanquet came in for a session on the morning of 8 May 1945 (the date of the end of the Second World War in Europe) and as usual we asked the board what it wished to talk about; it is seldom of any use to force the subconscious to talk about subjects it has not chosen. 'The sixth noun in Hamlet', was the immediate reply. We had neither of us read or seen Hamlet for some years, nor had we the slightest recollection of what that noun might be. We found it half way down the page, a good deal further down than we expected, and it was the word 'relief' in the sentence, 'For this relief much thanks!' – an apt enough subject for V.E. Day. A trivial incident, but it raises a number of questions; for instance, did one or both of us subconsciously know Hamlet by heart? And if we did, why count up the nouns and bring up the word relief in that circuitous way?

'Victorian Uplift'

The next case illustrates the emergence of material which has been repressed. (This quite often happens; I have known of three occasions, for instance, when a concealed love affair of one of the performers was revealed by the board, to the great distress and embarrassment of the person concerned.)

On this occasion, at his own request, a psychiatrist came to observe the board in action, and I asked him if he would like to add his fingers to ours. He did so and the board at once began to pour forth a stream of religious sentiment, which, being Freudian-trained, he declared indignantly was nothing but 'Victorian uplift'. The temptation to remark that the uplift only began when he put his fingers on the board was too great for me to resist. After some thought, his outlook being that of a true scientist, he admitted generously, 'You are right. I was unduly angry. It must have been me.' Ten years later he became a Christian. I have seen the same type of 'upwelling' occur with a religiously inclined young man who had married an attractive, ardently left-wing humanist wife and to please her had repressed his religious leanings. Conversely, hidden resentments, frustrations and jealousies can also emerge; in fact, the use of ouija boards and other such devices by persons ignorant of the psychology involved can lead to tricky and painful situations, especially as many people are more impressed by statements – and predictions – which come from a mysterious source than they are by those from one which is familiar.

But still, there are hints which cannot be ignored that the material which emerges by means of this type of device does not always originate in the subconscious of any of the performers; occasionally it seems to be due to some unknown kind of contact with distant events or the thoughts of distant persons. An example of this possibility occurred just after four o'clock on a wet Sunday afternoon shortly after the Second World War. Staying with me was Miss Gertrude Johnson, a talented sensitive who had achieved remarkable results in many controlled experiments in ESP done by the scientist and psychical researcher, G. N. M. Tyrrell. In those days a programme called the Brain's Trust, in which experts answered questions sent in by listeners, went out on the radio every Sunday afternoon. Having nothing else to do and there being no radio in the house, it occurred to me that we might try to obtain a piece of information, which we could not have known already, from a ouija board, by asking it to tell us one of the questions being asked on the current programme. I knew I could check the result from the repeat of the programme the following Thursday. The board replied to our inquiry, 'Something about the difference between two kinds of language', and I heard on the Thursday repeat broadcast that one of the questions asked that Sunday afternoon had been about the relative usefulness of studying classical or modern languages.

Automatic Poetry

Incidents as simple as this, of course, could easily be dismissed as accidental coincidences, were it not for the existence of others similar but so much more complicated that to ascribe the many resemblances in them to chance is very difficult. Take the following case investigated by the Society for Psychical Research. A group of six Spiritualists used to meet regularly at Flushing in Holland with the idea of getting into communication with the dead. On the evening of 23 July 1922, they began by table tilting but had no success. Then they turned to a device similar in principle to a ouija board in which a moveable pointer was held over the alphabet. This time things went better: they spelt out that an Englishman was communicating and that he was prepared to write them a song. (Four of them knew no English; the other two had once learnt it but had not kept it up.) A poem was then spelt out (see C in box) as from the Englishman who was, presumably, in view of the following facts, a subconscious dramatization resulting from their Spiritualist beliefs.

Opposite the house where the meetings took place lived a 15-year-old boy, who, scenting a mystery, very much wanted to attend the gatherings, but was not allowed to. On that July evening he watched the visitors go into the house for the meeting and ardently longed to join them. Then, disconsolately, having nothing to do, he got out an old school book which contained an English poem (see A in box) he had once had to learn, and drowsed over it during the course of the meeting across the road. The next day one of the participants at the meeting heard what he had been doing during the meeting and asked him to type out the poem from memory (see B in box).

A	B
Original Poem	***Boy's Version***
Evening Song	***Evening Song***
The sun has set	The sun has set,
And now anew	and now a new
With fallen dew	With fallen dew
The grass is wet.	The grass is wet
Each little bird	And little burd
Has sunk to rest	is sing to rest
Within its nest	Within his nest
No song is heard.	No song is heard

C

Automatists' Version

THE SUN HAS SET
AND NOW Anew
WITH F A LL END EW
THE GRASS IS WET
FIrSt parT
each little bird
Has sunk storest
witH ts netstn
O Sng is hear

However intriguing, suggestive and complicated such material may be, so far nearly all of it is anecdotal; hence the sceptic can always dismiss each instance of it separately as due to fraud; it must, he insists, be produced in controlled conditions to order. This is a tough challenge for neither investigator nor performer has any idea of the psychological processes involved since these are entirely unconscious – how unconscious is neatly demonstrated in some ingenious experiments carried out by the eminent French psychologist, Professor Charles Richet, in the early days of psychical research. Another psychologist, Dr Alan Gauld, has recently summarized them as follows in *The Founders of Psychical Research* (1968):

> The set-up was complex. At a small table sat two persons, A and B, with the alphabet laid out in front of them. A passed a pointer continually over the alphabet. B noted down the letter over which the pointer was each time he heard a bell ring. The bell was rung automatically whenever another table in the room, at which sat three other persons, C, D and E, was tilted. C, D and E had their hands on the table in ordinary 'table-tilting' fashion; they were so seated that they could not see the activities of A and B. A sixth person, F (usually Richet), sat apart from both groups, concentrating on a name (obtained randomly from a reference book). The letters spelled out in many cases closely followed the letters of the name on which F was concentrating. It was easy to show that the coincidences between them greatly exceeded chance. Yet C, D and E did not know what they were spelling out, and A and B, who did know it, did not know the target.

Such scattered hints of unconscious interlinkage between the living are not uncommon, but for the most part scientists are inclined to look on them with a jaundiced eye. This is natural enough, for to them the process implied is a heresy; it does not fit into the pattern of the physical world as they envisage it. Worse, many of the people who provide the material containing such hints want to believe that their material comes from the dead, and to orthodox materialist science that is a primitive superstition. There is a further reason for regret, that the questions of survival and of unconscious interlinkage between the living are so often entangled: at present there seems no way to prove – or disprove – survival, which therefore becomes a remote problem, whereas experimental research into ESP suggests that the interlinkage hinted at by ouija board and similar activities may one day be recognized as a constantly occurring natural phenomenon.

ROSALIND HEYWOOD

Ouspensky was already deeply committed to an attempt to reconcile Western logical thought with Eastern mysticism when he met Gurdjieff, and discovered that many of his teachings complemented his own. From then on he devoted his life to the development of Gurdjieff's ideas

OUSPENSKY

RUSSIAN AUTHOR, mathematician and mystic, Peter Demianovich Ouspensky was born in Moscow in 1878. His philosophic and speculative writings *Tertium Organum* and *A New Model of the Universe* were bestsellers in the United States in the 1920s, but he is chiefly known for his lucid account of the teaching of G. I. Gurdjieff (see GURDJIEFF), published posthumously with the subject's consent under the title *In Search of the Miraculous*.

A short, stocky man with grey-blue eyes and pince-nez spectacles, Ouspensky was an outstanding lecturer on account of his penetrating thought and challenging approach. His father, Demian Petrovich Ouspensky, was an army officer and his mother was a painter. Of precocious intelligence, after reading Lermontov and Turgenev, at the age of six he became interested in poetry and painting; at 13 his interest turned to dreams and consequently to psychology; by 18 he had begun to travel and write. He continued studying intensively biology, mathematics and psychology. He relates: 'I was very anarchistically inclined at that time. I particularly distrusted all forms of academic science and took a firm decision never to pass any examinations and never to take any degrees.'

Ouspensky's first book was *Kinemadrama*, a novel on the theme of eternal recurrence. In 1907 he discovered theosophical literature, then prohibited in Russia, and 'found a possible angle for the study of religion and mysticism and received a new impulse for the study of "higher dimensions".' The publication in 1909 of *The Fourth Dimension* placed him in the front rank of writers on abstract mathematical theory.

The same year, at the age of 31, he moved from Moscow to St Petersburg (Leningrad) where he published several books including *Superman*, *What is Yoga?* and, in 1912, *Tertium Organum*. This book deeply questioned the whole philosophic foundation of the scientific thinking of the day concerning space, time and relativity; it endeavoured to reconcile Western logical thought with Eastern mysticism. A year later, in 1913, a short work on *The Symbolism of the Tarot* was published.

Ouspensky then began to travel extensively in search of a contact with Eastern traditional and esoteric schools. In 1913–14 he went to Egypt and continued to Ceylon and India, returning to England shortly after the outbreak of the First World War. A notable series of lectures on his travels and 'search for the miraculous', given in 1915 in St Petersburg, attracted large audiences and a rapidly growing following in Russian intellectual circles. Among this audience was Sophia Grigorievna Maximenko, whom he married two years later.

Meeting with Gurdjieff

In 1915 Ouspensky met George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, an event which marked a turning point in his life. Gurdjieff's ideas profoundly impressed him. he recognized that Gurdjieff had discovered in the East many things for which he himself had searched. 'I realized,' he wrote, 'that I had met with a completely new system of thought surpassing all I knew before. This system threw quite a new light on psychology and explained what I could not understand before in esoteric ideas.' Ouspensky began to form special study groups in St Petersburg which Gurdjieff visited regularly. From that moment until Ouspensky's death the study and practical development of Gurdjieff's ideas constituted his principal aim.

These activities were interrupted at the end of 1916 when Ouspensky obtained a commission in the army but he was honourably discharged after only four months on account of poor eyesight, two weeks before the Revolution broke out. Seeing then no hope of continuing his work in Russia, he decided to emigrate to London.

Ouspensky rejoined Gurdjieff, who had already left Moscow, in Alexandropol in June 1917; in July with several friends from the Moscow and St Petersburg groups they moved to Essentuki and then to Tuapse on the Black Sea. In the autumn of 1917 Ouspensky paid a last visit to St Petersburg to rescue what he could of notes and manuscripts, leaving a bare week before the Bolsheviks overthrew the provisional government.

Interested from a very early age in the study of dreams and psychology, Ouspensky became a disciple of the remarkable Russian teacher Gurdjieff, whose ideas prompted him to write: 'I realized that I had met with a completely new system of thought surpassing all I knew before.' Ouspensky devoted his life to exploring and expounding these ideas

The year 1918 was spent in the company of Gurdjieff on the Black Sea; but that winter Ouspensky returned to Essentuki. He only succeeded in reaching Constantinople (Istanbul), crowded with Russians, in January 1920. There he wrote and lectured on psychology and his travels. That summer he again met Gurdjieff, arrived by way of Tiflis in company with some of their friends. In 1921, still without the means to reach England, Ouspensky unexpectedly received an invitation to visit London from Viscountess Rothermere, who wished to meet the author of *Tertium Organum*, which had aroused considerable interest on its publication in English.

Reaching London in August, Ouspensky found himself in contact with influential people who became interested in his work. In 1924 he broke with Gurdjieff and decided to continue his work in England, independently.

From 1924 until 1940 Ouspensky wrote and lectured in London, and held study groups to investigate Gurdjieff's ideas which were attended by many well-known people. He completed *A New Model of the Universe* incorporating revisions of several previous works and wrote a detailed account of his years with Gurdjieff, *In Search of the Miraculous*.

At the outbreak of the Second World War Ouspensky moved to New York to continue lectures, discussions and work on Gurdjieff's ideas and on his own last book. Publication of *Kinemadrama* in English, entitled *The Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*, was arranged. Early in 1947 Ouspensky, accompanied by a few pupils, returned to England; he died there later in the same year.

CHRISTOPHER FREMANTLE

FURTHER READING: P. D. Ouspensky: *Tertium Organum* (Random, 1970), *A New Model of the Universe* (Knopf, 1934), *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (Random, 1973), *The Fourth Way* (Knopf, 1957); and *In Search of the Miraculous* (Harcourt, Brace and World, 1947).

OUT-OF-THE-BODY EXPERIENCES

AN OUT-OF-THE-BODY experience is one in which the subject appears to view the external world from some position other than that of his physical body. The following is an example:

> . . . It was summer time, the day bright and sunny and I wore a dress and blazer. I was walking along Brentwood High Street in Essex and there were people shopping and walking near me. As far as I can remember I was thinking of nothing in particular when suddenly I was about 15 ft. above myself and I watched myself walking towards a cinema called the Palace which was a short distance ahead of me. I noticed the people walking round me. I supposed I watched myself walk about 30 or 40 steps and then I was back 'inside' myself again. I felt in no way different and just went on walking along the High St. The whole incident must only have taken a few seconds . . .

Experiences of this kind seem to be relatively common. When the Institute of Psychophysical Research appealed by means of the Press and sound radio for first-hand accounts of experiences of this kind, cases were received from some 400 subjects, and it was clear that with further publicity more cases could have been obtained. The accounts exhibited many common characteristics, some of which are discussed in this article.

Out-of-the-body experiences may be of two kinds, firstly, 'parasomatic', in which the subject appears to be located in a duplicate body more or less resembling his physical body, and secondly, 'asomatic', in which the subject, at his new point of view, does not appear to be associated with a body at all – in other words, he feels he is just a disembodied consciousness or 'a pin-point of presence', as one subject puts it.

The following is an example of a parasomatic case in which the subject's duplicate body appeared to resemble her normal physical body very closely, even to the extent of duplicating the kind of clothes that the subject normally wore.

> I looked down at my second self and found myself to be a complete replica of my material self. I touched my clothes, and looked at myself and was astounded to see that I was wearing the same black skirt white blouse with small red spots on it same shoes etc. . . I can remember touching myself and feeling the texture of my clothing this all felt quite solid . . .

In the asomatic case, on the other hand, the subject may describe himself as 'looking at himself from nothing'.

The circumstances under which out-of-the-body experiences may occur are extremely various. Some subjects, such as the one first quoted, may be walking at the time of the experience, or carrying out such everyday activities as gardening or housework.

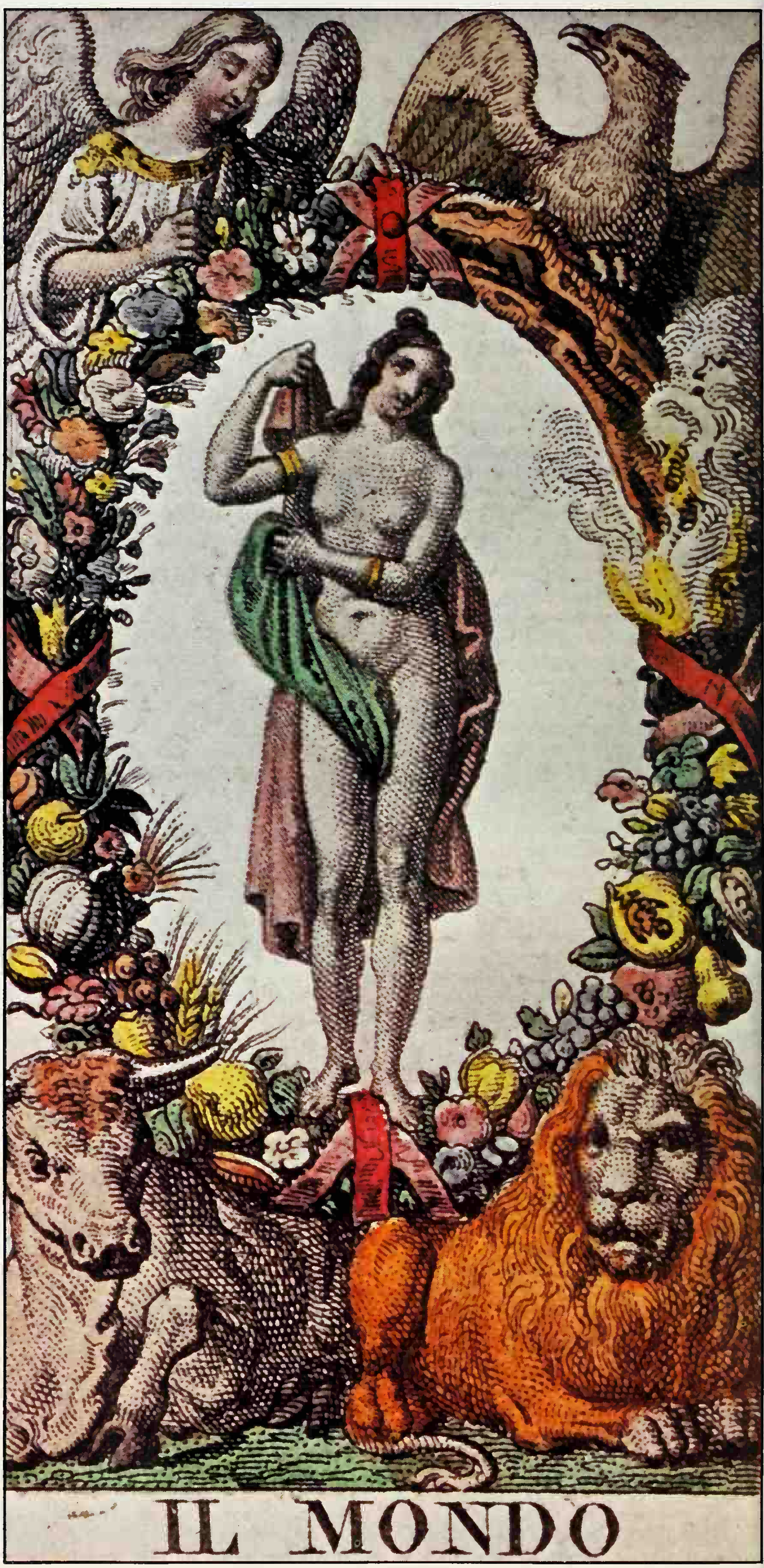
Many of the cases collected by the Institute occurred when the subject was involved in an accident or suffering from physical illness of some kind, but some seem to have occurred when the subject was simply in an 'everyday' frame of mind, or even feeling particularly happy or relaxed. One person writes, 'I had just become engaged and I cannot remember any other time of feeling such pure happiness.'

If the subject is engaged in some kind of physical activity at the time of his experience his body may continue to function in an apparently normal way while he appears merely to observe it from outside. In one case reported to the Institute, a dentist extracted a tooth while 'standing some three feet behind myself and to the left'. Other subjects describe watching themselves from above as they drove cars or motorcycles, or hearing their own singing performances or lecture from the back of the hall.

More Real than Reality

Cases such as this clearly raise the question, how can someone continue functioning in an apparently normal way while his 'consciousness' is concerned only in watching his movements from an external point? In some cases the subject may be performing an action which is so habitual that it is completely 'automatic' anyway, but in others some degree of conscious skill appears involved. Skill does not seem to be impaired while the subject 'watches' himself – though one woman who was 'settled firmly on the roof' of the car watched herself 'making every sort of fool of herself' in a driving test.

The emotions felt by the subject during an out-of-the-body experience are nearly always positive ones. Subjects appear to feel completely normal or natural in the out-of-the-body state, and may comment on how 'solid' or 'real' they felt, despite the fact that they were apparently disembodied. Some even described the out-of-the-body state as feeling more real than the normal state. As one subject put it: 'I had no further interest in my physical body, or indeed my physical life. I only wanted to pursue and prolong this happy state of being where everything was more bright, vivid and real than anything I had previously known.' As the following case illustrates, the subject may feel perfectly



calm and detached despite the seemingly desperate condition of his physical body.

> I was in a farmhouse, in the line, in Italy in the summer of 1944 when the house was hit by a shell. I was thrown through the air and, as it transpired, hit in the forehead and arm.
>
> As I landed on my back, my injured arm fell across my forehead. Unable to feel anything in either part, I assumed that my head had been half blown off and I lay, waiting to die.
>
> During this period, the length of which I have no idea, although subsequent events proved it must have been seconds only, I was completely calm, in fact disinterested. Also during this period, I became aware that I, or my seat of consciousness, seemed to be hovering above my body at a height of perhaps 8–10 feet, which would have meant that my normal body would have been halfway through the roof.
>
> Unfortunately this state was of extremely short duration and my objective view seemed to be limited to my normal body below, which I could see in some detail.
>
> Again, my reaction was one of serenity and disinterest. My body could have been any body or any object, come to that, such was my state of disinterest.
>
> This state must have lasted microseconds and I returned to a normal state, where I decided that I wasn't dying and that I had better get to my feet and see what was happening.

Often the subject feels in an extremely happy or joyful state, and feelings of excitement, elation, and exhilaration may be reported. He may also claim to have felt xtremely well during his experience, even if his body was ill at the time. 'The escaped one felt absolutely wonderful, very light and ull of the most wonderful vitality, in fact more well than I have ever felt before or ince.' One subject sums up: 'The whole xperience was absolutely wonderful, and I wish I could experience a similar one again . . .'

If unpleasant emotions such as anxiety do arise, these usually seem to be connected with attempts to end the state. For example he subject may become anxious if he feels hat the experience is not entirely under ontrol; he may be afraid of being unable to nd it, or of 'not being able to get back into he body'.

The subject is quite clear that he is in an out-of-the-body state, once he has seen his physical body from outside. In addition, subects describe their intellectual processes and reasoning powers as being quite normal or even superior to normal. As regards 'the way things look' in an out-of-the-body experience, it seems that they look just as they do in the normal state – for example, normally coloured and with the same amount of visual definition. One subject wrote that he could see the room in great detail, even the specks of dust. Another describes experimenting on her hearing: 'I wondered, as I saw my physical body in the bed "Is my hearing acute, without ears?" and I approached a patient who was asleep, and listened to her breathing. I could hear it extremely clearly. I thought "My sight is acutely clear too".' Sometimes subjects report that their perceptions were enhanced and some comment on the brightness of the colours seen.

Leaving the Body At Will

Although many out-of-the-body experiences occur involuntarily and, more often than not, only once in a lifetime, there are people who claim to be able to induce the out-of-the-body state more or less at will. Three methods of inducing or encouraging these states are predominant among those mentioned by people who have made a practice of doing so. These are firstly, physical relaxation exercises, secondly, various kinds of concentration and meditation, and thirdly, the cultivation of lucid dreams, those in which the subject is aware that he is dreaming. Oliver Fox, a subject who trained himself to have out-of-the-body experiences, claimed to be able to enter them directly from the lucid dream state. This method is discussed in my book *Lucid Dreams*.

A number of other subjects have found that the systematic practice of relaxation exercises favoured the occurrence of out-of-the-body experiences. The following is one such subject's account of the result of his relaxation procedures:

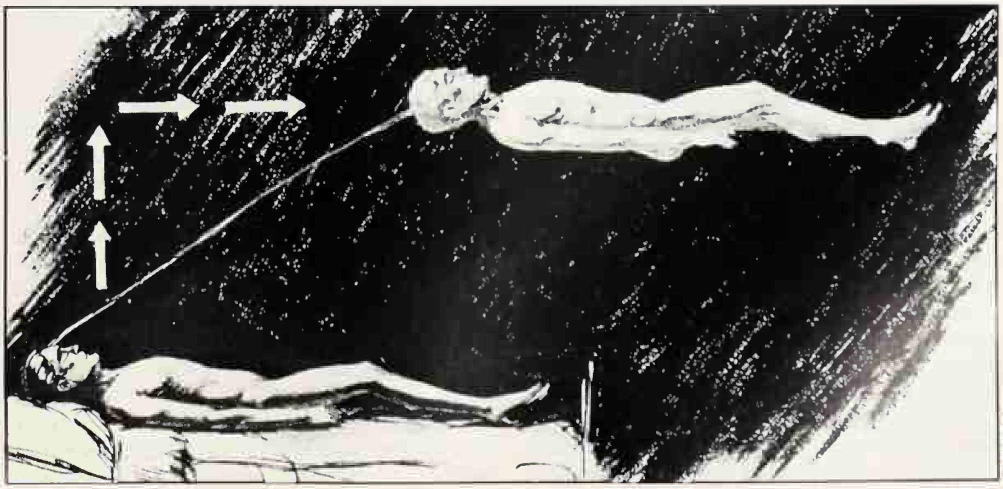
> I went through all the usual proceedings of relaxation on each occasion, but sometimes when I was completely relaxed and numb all over I used to feel this very pleasant rising feeling whereupon I became conscious of something very close to my face. This happened three or four times during my experiments.
>
> Of course I didn't realise what was happening at that age . . . As for my recent experiences . . . after a few false starts I felt this familiar rising feeling and low and behold I could 'see' the ceiling right in front of my face. . . Upon realising where I was and my apparent success I was literally pulled back into my flesh body.

Once out of his body the subject may attempt various kinds of experiment. For example, he may move about or 'travel' to a distant place to 'see' what is going on there. Sometimes he appears to obtain information in this way that he could not have obtained in the normal state or from the position occupied by his physical body. The following case will illustrate this possibility:

> Floated over Cheltenham – to friend's . . . Room. could not find – went searching – deeply perturbed. found her asleep – in a Divan, in partly furnished room. spoke to her but did not disturb. Met her for lunch three days later – jokingly asked her where she was on the Sunday night, I described room and Divan, she looked very shocked, said yes, I was there . . .
>
> . . . she did (take) me there one week later and asked if we might see the room in which I had found her on that Sunday night. NOTE: It was absolutely as I had described it – even to the unfinished white blouse on sewing machine.

The room in question was a sewing-room; the subject and the friend whom she 'visited' there agree that the subject had never entered this room. The subject's friend was sleeping in this room on this particular night, and not in her own house, as a result of a sudden domestic crisis. The friend confirms her part in the incident as follows:

> Mrs. A. was a friend whom I saw from time to time, and one day she got in touch with me, and related that she had in her sleep been trying to find me, and said had seen herself looking into the house where I lived and could not see me. Actually I was staying with a friend about seven minutes walk away and it seems she saw me lying there. Her description of the room was accurate, it was really a sewing room with a divan in the corner, all of which she described to me. I then took her along and Mrs. A. said 'Yes this is the room – We both used to visit here, myself very very often, but Mrs. A. only I should say three times and I am sure had never been to the top of the house, where this room was.



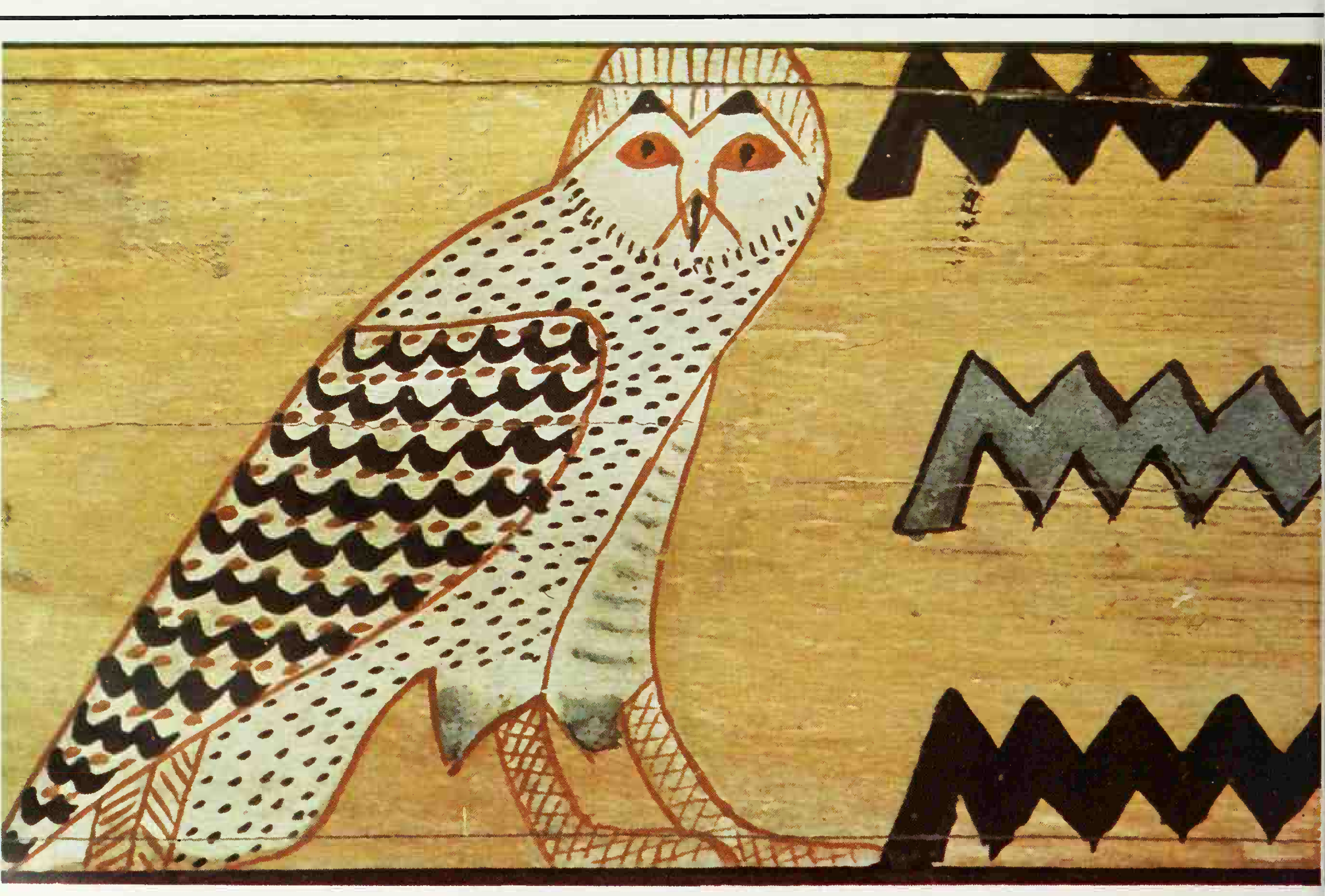
The experience of getting out of one's body has naturally interested occultists *Left* 'The World', a Tarot card often interpreted as a symbol of release from the everyday physical plane and entry into the astral: Italian, early 19th century *Right* Illustration from the *Projection of the Astral Body* by Sylvan Muldoon and H. C. Carrington (Rider, 1929), showing the astral body leaving the physical body: the experience can be deliberately induced, though the connecting 'cord', on which Muldoon placed great emphasis, does not appear in many people's descriptions of their experiences

Out-of-the-body experiences raise important questions for philosophers and psychologists. When someone perceives his surroundings in an apparently normal way but from a position which is different from that of his physical body, what part do his visual and other sense organs play in producing the experience? Indeed what part do his sense organs play in his normal mode of perception if he can apparently do without them in the out-of-the-body state? We must remember that in about one third of the cases the subject's physical body is unconscious at the time of the experience, so that his eyes are shut throughout, and cannot therefore be helping him to construct a picture of the world as it would look from the new point of view. Nevertheless, some subjects have described what was going on around them while unconscious, and those present have subsequently confirmed their accounts.

One also wants to know what is the electrical activity of the brain (as measured by the electroencephalogram, or 'EEG') during an out-of-the-body experience. In many cases the subject appears to be deeply unconscious. Now if the electrical record of the brain in such cases shows the patterns appropriate to the subject's physiological state (for example the slow *delta* rhythms observed during sleep as opposed to the faster waves which are dominant in waking states) we have to reconcile this with the fact that the subject is apparently having a conscious experience at the time. Alternatively, if the subject's EEG shows the rhythms appropriate to conscious experience, we have to reconcile this with the fact that his physical body is apparently inert and unresponsive to physical stimuli. At all events, out-of-the-body experiences present science with a challenging phenomenon of which no satisfactory explanation exists. (See also ASTRAL BODY.)

CELIA GREEN

FURTHER READING: Celia Green, *Out-of-the-Body Experiences*; *Lucid Dreams*, both published by the Institute of Psychophysical Research in 1980. See also Oliver Fox, *Astral Projection* (Citadel Press, 1974); Charles McCreery, *Science, Philosophy and ESP* (Shoe String Press, 1967); J. H. M. Whiteman, *The Mystical Life* (Humanities, 1961).

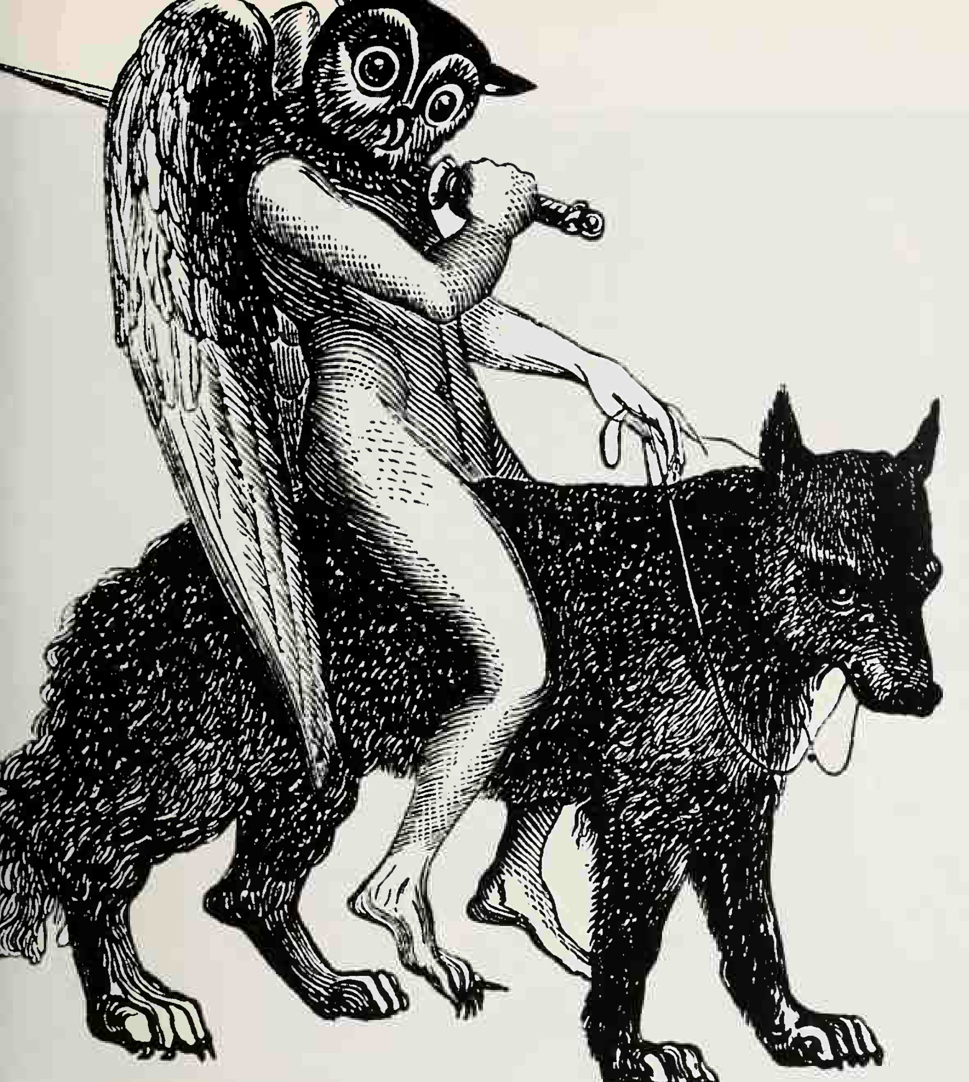


Because it is a creature which is active in the dark, and because its face, with great staring eyes, is uncannily human, the owl has gained a sinister reputation, being often associated with death, mourning and evil *Above* Owl painted on the inner side of a coffin from El Bersha in Egypt, c 2000 BC

OWL

ALMOST EVERYWHERE owls have been associated with strange powers, especially the forces of evil and misfortune. The lore concerning owls has such basic similarities throughout most of the world that it would seem to have arisen from a deep-seated and disquieting emotional response, evoked by a creature having characteristics interpreted as partly human. Thus, an owl with large eyes set in a flattish 'face' stares like a human being. Moreover, many species utter hoots, halloos or screams which sound like human calls. To hear a screeching at night in a tropical forest as of a woman in agony is a spine-chilling experience – until it is realized that the call is being uttered by an owl. The nocturnal habits of owls contribute to their sinister reputation, especially as their silent flight enables them to appear with alarming unexpectedness from the darkness. Furthermore, as owls often roost by day in holes and crevices in abandoned, dilapidated buildings, they are often regarded as embodiments of spirits or evil presences.

As early as the Old Stone Age we have evidence of the interest aroused by this bird, for a pair of nesting snowy owls with their chick is engraved on a rock face in a cave in southern France. On a Sumerian tablet dating from 2300–2000 BC a nude goddess is depicted flanked on either side by an owl. She is believed to be the goddess of death. A number of biblical references associate the owl with misery and desolation, and the bird is mentioned in connection with 'dragons' and wild beasts and also with mourning. Greek and Latin writers refer to the owl as a bird of ill omen. Ovid, Pliny and other authors associate the birds with death and their calls are mentioned as sinister. When an owl appeared in the Capitol at Rome it occasioned such alarm that the place was cleansed with water and sulphur to expel



Museum of the American Indian

Although it often has strongly evil associations, by contrast the owl is sometimes regarded as a wise and benevolent bird *Left* The demon Andras, who stirs up quarrels, shown with wings and an owl's head, riding a black wolf and carrying the sword of faction: from *Dictionnaire Infernal* by Collin de Plancy *Above* North American Indian effigy jar in the shape of an owl

ny evil influences it might have brought.

As is not uncommon with creatures or bjects regarded as mysterious and arousing strong emotional response, owls may sometimes be regarded as having properties conrary to those generally attributed to them. Something which is apt to frighten people nay come to be considered effective as a leterrent against that which they fear; the vil thing may be enlisted as an ally. In ncient China, where owl sacrifices were ffered, ornaments called 'owl corners' were laced on buildings in the belief that they protected them from fire. In Semitic counries the owl is usually regarded as ominous nd in Persia is spoken of as 'the angel of leath', yet in Israel little grey owls are conidered good omens when they appear near he crops. Perhaps the belief originated rom the observation that these birds prey on birds and mammals which damage crops. In ncient Athens the little owl was associated vith Athene, probably as goddess of night, out being a common bird it was regarded n a friendly way and became the emblem of he city. 'There goes an owl' was the Athenian saying indicating signs of victory.

Latin writers early in our era alluded o the custom of hanging up owls in order o deflect storms and it was believed that an owl nailed up with wings outspread would avert hail and lightning. The custom of nailing owls to barn doors persisted into the 9th century in England. The Romans used epresentations of owls to combat the Evil Eye. Among the tribes of northern Asia owls were regarded as able to counteract evil powers. An owl might be placed over a child's cot to frighten away evil spirits. In India owl feathers were placed under the pillow of a restless child in order to induce sleep. The Ainu people of Japan made wooden images of owls and nailed them to their houses at times of famine or pestilence.

In Great Britain, as in most of Europe, the owl has been, and to some extent still is, regarded as ominous. Chaucer wrote of the owl as the bringer of death, and Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar* (Act I, Sc. 3) mentioned it among other evil omens:

> Yesterday the bird of night did sit
> Even at noon-day upon the market-place
> Hooting and shrieking . . .

In Africa owls are commonly associated with sorcery. When an owl perched on a dwelling in Bechuanaland the witch-doctor was called in to perform purificatory rites. The souls of sorcerers were called 'owls' in Madagascar. The Yoruba of Nigeria believe that wizards send out owls as their emissaries to kill people. In certain regions of Nigeria the natives avoid naming the owl, referring to it as 'the bird that makes you afraid'.

Owl-Egg Soup

In North America notions concerning owls varied. While the Pawnees thought of them as giving protection, the Ojibwas believed in an evil spirit which appeared in the guise of an owl. In California the white owl was thought to be an evil spirit and its feathers were worn as a counter-charm.

Since owls were regarded as embodying weird powers they were associated in Germany and elsewhere with witchcraft. The witches in *Macbeth* (Act IV Sc. 1) included in their brew 'Lizard's leg and howlet's wing': Pliny stated that an owl's heart placed on a woman's breast would force her to divulge secrets. This was repeated by Albertus Magnus and reappeared as recently as 1863 in a book published in Pennsylvania. Among the Greeks magical and medicinal virtues were attributed to owls' eggs. Given to a child they would ensure his life-long temperance. Owl-egg soup was a remedy for epilepsy and treatment of grey hair with the contents of an owl's egg would darken it. As the egg had to be one from which a male chick would have emerged, any failures could be easily explained.

The owl figures in a number of fables and legends. The story of 'The War of the Owls and Crows' may have symbolized the opposition between the moon and the sun. It came into Greek literature from India. According to a legend from Normandy the owl is disliked and mobbed by other birds because when the wren burnt its feathers in trying to fetch fire from heaven the owl refused to help by contributing some of its own to clothe the wren (see WREN). The owl's reputation as a bird of wisdom may have arisen through its association with Athene, the goddess of counsel.

E. A. ARMSTRONG

FURTHER READING: E. A. Armstrong, *The Folklore of Birds* (Collins, 1958).

The old folk culture of the Ozarks still thrives in local legends and songs, containing elements of British and European tradition, brought by emigrants and developing in its own way in the isolation of the hills: hillbilly music at the 'Fiddlers' Convention'

Famous for their 'feudin', fightin' ' ways, the hillbillies of the Ozark mountains love to tell tall stories of fabulous monsters, such as the chaw-green, a bear with a candy-striped rump and a fondness for chewing tobacco

OZARKS

THE OZARK HILLS were called 'a splendid and sequestered laboratory' for folklorists. They sprawl across the Arkansas-Missouri border, a region about 300 miles long and 150 wide, notable for peaks and knobs often reaching 2500 feet and made rugged by forests and razorback ridges. In the valleys and on the hillsides lived until recently the isolated and inbred people known as 'hillbillies', famous in song, story, comic strip and film – and to some extent in reality – for their uncouth, poverty-stricken, 'feudin' and fightin' ' ways.

The isolation of the Ozark people allowed them to retain intact much of the old folk culture, the traditional pioneer American folklore, long lost in more civilized areas. So out of the Ozarks has come one of the 'richest regional folk cultures' in the United States, in the words of the folklorist Richard M. Dorson. It contains elements of old British and European traditions, brought by the colonists, altered in certain ways over the generations but still traceable to its roots. Whatever the origins of the traditions, the lore remains a vital part of backwoods life for those who still live it today.

Our knowledge of Ozark lore comes mainly from Vance Randolph, who lived among the hill folk for decades, accumulating a hoard of Ozark doings and sayings, and collecting their songs, their tales, their myths and their magical beliefs.

Many of the region's favourite myths concern legendary folk heroes who reflect the more masculine Ozarkian virtues – heroic drinking, fighting, hunting, feats of strength and daring. Davy Crockett, the famous backwoodsman who became legendary, spent some time in Arkansas, and the hill folk enthusiastically claimed some of the heroic tales about him for their own. He had a 'snaggle-toothed grin' that could frighten animals into unconsciousness; he fought bears with his knife to save bullets, ate bearskins for breakfast, and once started a fire by striking his 'important member' (the euphemism is Vance Randolph's) against a rock to make sparks.

When Crockett left for Texas there was no shortage of heroes. The sharp-shooting gambler Ab Yancey claimed to have gone hunting with one bullet and, in a series of coincidences, to have bagged eight turkeys, two squirrels, two rabbits, 41 quails and a deer. Gib (or Kemp) Morgan was an oil driller who built pipelines so big that when the wells ran dry farmers could drive their cattle to market along the lines.

Tree-top Johnson was a woodsman so tall that he could never tell whether his feet were freezing or whether he had stepped into a forest fire; when thirsty, Johnson would squeeze out a cloud like a sponge. A giant blacksmith named Bib Tarkey once helped some harvesters by making a 24-foot scythe from metal wrenched off a railway bridge; he used an oak tree for a handle, and mowed 80 acres in half an hour.

The Big Black Booger

These heroes fit into that branch of folktale which the Ozarkians call 'windys', exaggerated lies. Another hero, vaguely called 'Jack' and perhaps not always the same man, can be found in a few tales dealing more explicitly with the supernatural. (He is related to the beanstalk Jack and the giant-killer Jack, both of which grisly nursery tales have made their way, only slightly altered, into the Ozark repertoire.) Jack arrives at a crucial moment to use some homespun magic and defeat the Devil or his witches. In one story, he becomes a St George character: a monster called the 'gower', lizard-like and 40 feet long, is raiding livestock and taking a maiden each year – until Jack kills it with two silver darts tipped with steel from a thunderbolt.

The Devil and witch lore of the Ozarkians closely resembles the old European tales from which it derives. So the Devil wanders the hills looking for sinners to snap up; he may appear as 'a big black booger' or bogeyman, or a headless giant with a cloven hoof, or an ordinary man who leaves no shadow or footprints – apart from his more usual horned and leather-winged guise. A heartfelt invocation of Christ, rather than magical means, is usually considered sufficient to thwart him.

Somewhat more effort was needed to deal with the swarms of witches who, according to tales, infested the hills. Some Ozarkians were recognized 'witch-masters', experienced in detecting and destroying these minions of Satan. Such detection involved scratching a cross on the suspect's chair or placing a Bible under her bed: if she was a witch, the Christian object would make her ill. Alternatively, salt placed under a suspect's chair would melt if she was a witch, and cause her dress to stick to it.

Hill Country Tales

The creative genius of Ozark folk expression lies in the short anecdotal legend.... The rich Ozark idiom of folk speech that flavors the tales little affects the balladry, and surprisingly few native ballads originate in the Ozarks. But the repertoire of tales is fresh and distinctively regional, even though one constant form refashions all the varieties of narrative. Märchen, legends, jokes, supernatural experiences, stories of local characters, neighborhood events, all emerge as actual incidents that transpired somewhere in the next holler or on the other side of the mountain. 'One time there wa...' the Ozark storytellers begin, and launch into a brief true narration, localized like an anecdote, believed like a legend, but structured, with opening and closing formulas and action in the middle, like a formal folktale. The word of the hillman comes into focus in these narratives, which served him in lieu of newspapers and radio. Gossip of the hills, sensational matters, pranks and antics and tomfoolery, circulate as local stories. The European wonder tale that wanders in from the southern Appalachians is cut down to size and given an Ozark setting; the abbreviated jest from the city is expanded and tied into an appropriate personality; the Negro story from the Mississippi Delta takes on a hill country hue. Because the tales are so splashed with local color, only the comparative folklorist discovers that the great majority are widely traveled.

Richard M. Dorson
American Folklore

Once the witch-master had pinpointed his witch (sometimes literally, for like the medieval witch-hunters the Ozarkians believed that witches feel no pain from pinpricks) he obeyed the old biblical maxim: 'thou shalt not suffer a witch to live'. He might either load his squirrel rifle with a silver bullet and shoot the old woman straightaway, or paint a picture of her and shoot that. Again, he might drive a nail through the heart of a picture of her drawn on the north side of a black oak; or cut her silhouette out of paper and tear it slowly to bits; or make a wax image of her and shoot, knife or burn it.

The ordinary folk kept their houses free from witches by driving three nails into their doors in the shape of a triangle, or fastening crossed hazel twigs to the doors, or the entrails of a horned owl, or indeed the traditional horseshoe, open end up for the horns motif. Others might drive a three-pronged cedar peg into their pathway to form the Trinity motif, regularly used in amulets and talismans, or they created that Ozarkian oddity called an 'egg tree' – a dead and trimmed shrub on which were carefully placed the blown shells of eggs.

All these punishments and precautions seemed justified, in terms of what a witch could do. They could cast spells on animals and crops, especially frequent with regard to cows, whose milk they stole by magical means or dried up. (Modern Ozark witches can put spells on cars, as they once did on horses or mules.) They made people ill using the old technique of a doll or image containing some of the victim's hair or fingernail clippings, and they could even kill. A gruesome recipe for murder required the witch to scrape dirt from a grave with her left forefinger at midnight; mix it with the blood of a black bird, preferably a raven; tie the mess in a rag that had touched a corpse; and bury the thing under the victim's doorstep, or hide it under the seat of his wagon or car. When he stepped over it, or sat above it, he would die within days.

Hen-Pecked by a Ghost

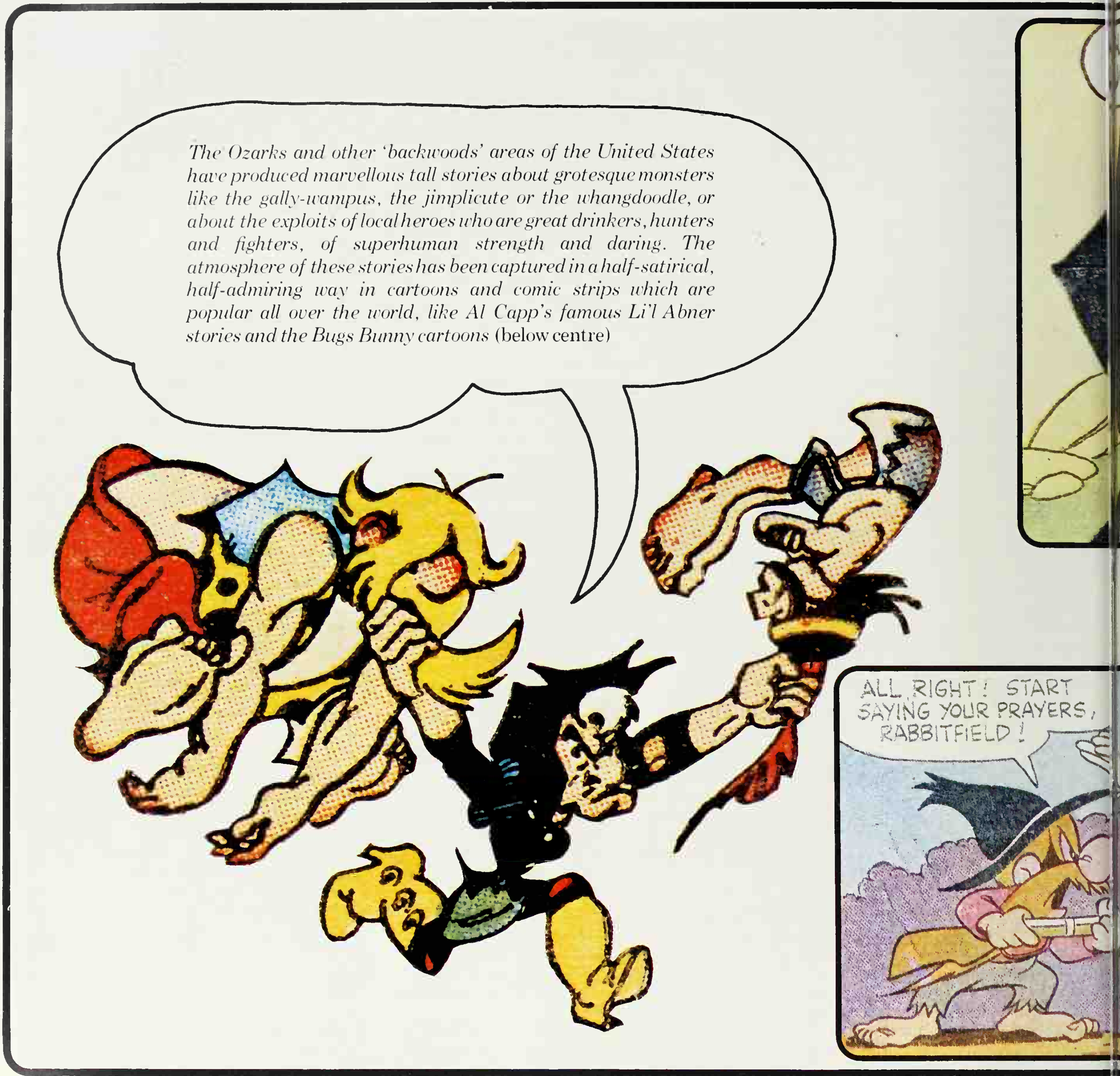
Witches often roamed the countryside invisibly, or in the shapes of cats, wolves, even rabbits, to carry out their evil work. When not plaguing honest Christians, they flew up the chimney or through the keyhole to attend an orgiastic sabbath at which the Devil usually presided. Just as familiar to the student of European witchcraft is the careful Ozarkian distinction between witches, the Devil's handmaidens, and various non-evil workers of magic. The latter are generically called 'power doctors', and may include the village herbalist or 'yarb' doctor, the dowser or 'water-witcher', and the healer who cures illness by different combinations of laying on of hands and quasi-biblical incantations.

Ghost stories occur fairly abundantly in the hills, and like the witch tales are often clearly reminiscent of their European origins. Many concern old Ozarkians returning to right some wrong, to haunt the scene of some injustice, or to reveal the whereabouts of buried treasure. Characteristically, some Ozarkians come back out of sheer 'cussedness', such as the nagging shrewish wife of one tale. One day some neighbours heard the dead wife's spectral voice screaming and cursing at the husband from inside the cabin; but the long-suffering man, sitting quietly on his verandah, said in a typical Ozark understatement, 'Don't get excited, she ain't mad at nobody but me.'

Those weird tales of the Ozarkians which are neither demonic nor ghostly reveal some interesting preoccupations of the hill folk, including a prevalence of bestial sexual unions and their monstrous offspring. Naked wild men or women have been said to run with wolf packs, and to sire or bear children who were half-human, half-wolf. Some traditional Cherokee lore creeps in here, such as the motif of the female animal in human form who marries a man but returns to the wild when her son is born.

A number of tales concern superbly fabulous monsters that are said to lurk in the wilderness. Among these is a cousin (or an alter ego) of the gower called the 'gowrow'. This too is reptilian, 20 feet long, with horns on its back and webbed feet, an eater of livestock and sometimes of people. Another huge lizard, the 'jimplicute', ambushes travellers by night and sucks their blood. The 'kingdoodle' or 'whangdoodle' is a lizard 14 hands high, but mild-mannered and not carnivorous. But the reptilian 'high-behind', which has back legs ten times longer than its forelegs, is said to lap up people 'like a toad-frog ketchin' flies'.

The 'snawfus' is an albino deer sometimes said to be winged, sometimes wingless, but



The Ozarks and other 'backwoods' areas of the United States have produced marvellous tall stories about grotesque monsters like the gally-wampus, the jimplicute or the whangdoodle, or about the exploits of local heroes who are great drinkers, hunters and fighters, of superhuman strength and daring. The atmosphere of these stories has been captured in a half-satirical, half-admiring way in cartoons and comic strips which are popular all over the world, like Al Capp's famous Li'l Abner stories and the Bugs Bunny cartoons (below centre)

able to jump higher than the treetops; sighting it is an omen of death. The 'bing-buffer' is shaped like a giant hippopotamus, but with a 40-foot hinged tail which it uses as a sling to hurl stones at its prey. The 'gally-wampus' is a huge cat-like or mink-like monster, a great killer of livestock; also cat-like is the 'whistling wampus', which lures people with its whistle into the forest.

The 'chaw-green' is bear-like, but with a candy-striped rump and a fondness for chewing tobacco. The 'fish hound', having fur on its belly and feathers on its back, eats all the fish to thwart fishermen. The 'side-hill hoofer' looks like a beaver but is as big as a yearling calf; its legs are shorter on one side so it can run upright on the sides of mountains – but only in one direction.

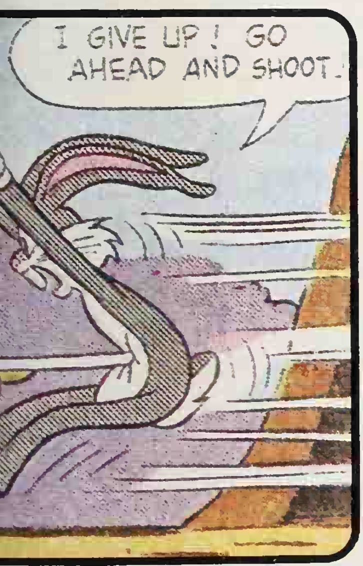
These (and many more) glorious inventions of Ozark 'windy' spinners are filled out by tales of frogs as big as steers, vast turtles that gobble up mules, and hordes of water monsters very like that of Loch Ness. The creatures' names alone make it obvious that they are not to be taken seriously: they spring from the Ozarkians' love of spinning tales, not from hillbilly credulity.

Among the enormous range of beliefs still more or less current in the backwoods are some familiar motifs. Sympathetic magic is often evident in the hill folk's superstitions, as in their practices connected with healing or the prevention of disease. Ozarkians would wear buzzard feathers in their hatbands to ward off rheumatism, and carry hogs' teeth in the right-hand trouser pocket to prevent toothache.

In the category of omens, weather prediction takes precedence. Snake tracks foretell rain, as do dogs eating grass and cats sneezing. The number of fogs in August equals the number of snowfalls to come in winter; the number of thunderclaps heard in February indicates the number of frosts to come in May. Omens directed elsewhere include the belief that a cobweb over the door means a girl's lover will never call again; a dream that occurs during one's first sleep under a new coverlet must always come true; bad luck on one's birthday means bad luck all the year round; general good luck is indicated by a dead crow on the road, or a butterfly in the house.

There are certain specific taboos among

AIN'T TH' KICKAPOO JOY
UICE FINISHED YET?
WILL BE, SOON'S WE ADD A LI'L EXTRY BITE!!


I GIVE UP! GO AHEAD AND SHOOT.

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the beliefs of the Ozarkians. Girls must not comb their hair after dark or they will lose their lovers; pregnant women must not cross running water or they will die in childbirth; housewives must not run out of salt, or they face a year's poverty. Farming taboos are especially numerous: you must not laugh while planting corn, or the grains will grow too far apart; you must never pull a hog's tail, or he will not fatten; killing toads makes the cows' milk bloody; changing a horse's name may cause its death; slaughtering pigs while the moon is waning ruins the pork. Above all, never transplant a cedar tree or burn a peach tree, for fear of terrible disaster. To avoid bad luck in general, you should not lend or borrow salt, go back into a house for something forgotten, put rifles under beds, sing before breakfast or in bed, or whistle in the privy; and women should not be allowed to whistle at any time.

A number of superstitions take the form of explicit ritual, active magic either to forestall bad luck or to bring good. Farmers should get angry when planting peppers, and should cause cucumbers to grow to a good size by ensuring that they are planted by a virile, well-endowed man. A feather from each of your chickens, buried under the henhouse, will protect them from animal or human marauders. Salt and pepper must be the first objects taken into a new house. Girls can increase their sex appeal by eating raw chicken hearts, while men can improve their virility with wild ginseng root; girls can win a man's love by slipping a bit of their fingernails or a drop of menstrual blood into his drink; a boy can hide the dried tongue of a dove in the girl's house, and she can then deny him nothing.

If a woman shakes her skirts at the new moon, she will get a new dress; if she catches a butterfly and bites off its head, she will get a dress the colour of the butterfly. Windows and doors should be kept open on New Year's Eve, for good luck all year. You should kill the first snake seen in spring, or you will be ruined by autumn.

In a way, the hills have acted like a game reserve for the folk beliefs of the Ozarkians; if they are not always practised or believed in today, they are nevertheless freshly remembered.

DOUGLAS HILL

PACIFIC NORTH-WEST INDIANS

Given to fun and feasting in the winter months, before the serious business of the year, the Indians of the North-West Pacific coastline marked their most important occasions with a ceremony known as the potlatch, which might take months or even years to prepare

'IN THE BEGINNING there was nothing but water. The Raven was flying over the surface of the water, but could not perch anywhere because there was neither land nor tree. He decided to create the world. He picked up some small pebbles and flew over the sea. Now and then he dropped a pebble into the water and an island came into existence. Thus the dry land appeared in the midst of the water of the ocean. After that the Raven started to create all things. He created trees and grass, fish in the water, and birds in the air, and every kind of beast in the forest. There were now all living creatures except man. He wanted to create man also but could not do it for a long period of time, because he did not know the suitable material to use. He tried to use stone, water, air and many other materials, but in vain. At last he took some clay and wood and created a man and woman.'

So says one of the many creation myths of the Kwakiutl tribes. A supreme god is not recognizable in North-West Coast religion and mythology, although there are a number of dominant characters drawn from the sky, earth, sea and underworld who are credited with, or identified with discoveries and aspects of the way of life.

In effect the legend was a lesson from

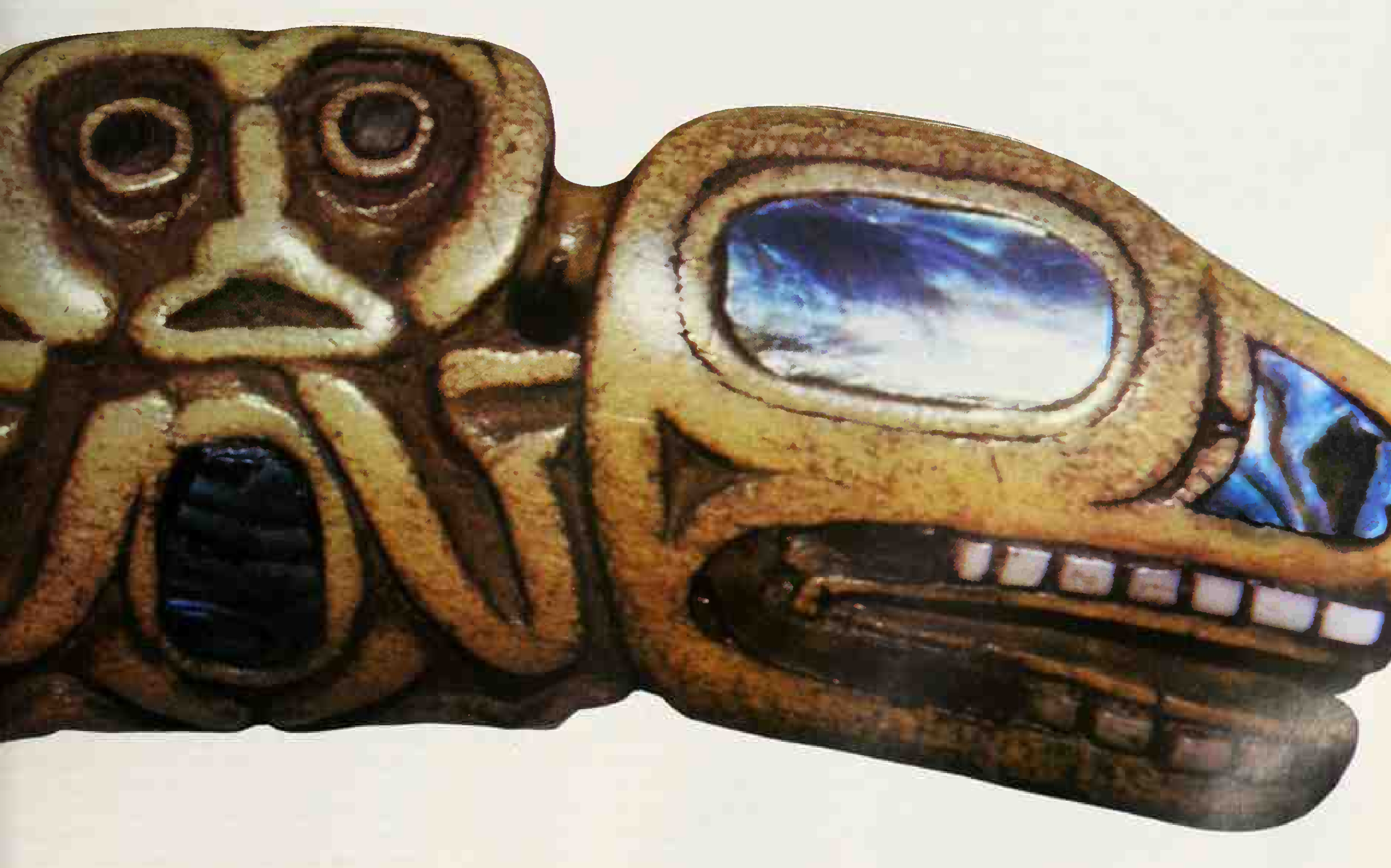
British Museum/C. M. Dixon

Raven as the creator was a supreme trickster; whilst bestowing gifts on man he could at the same time make a fool of man

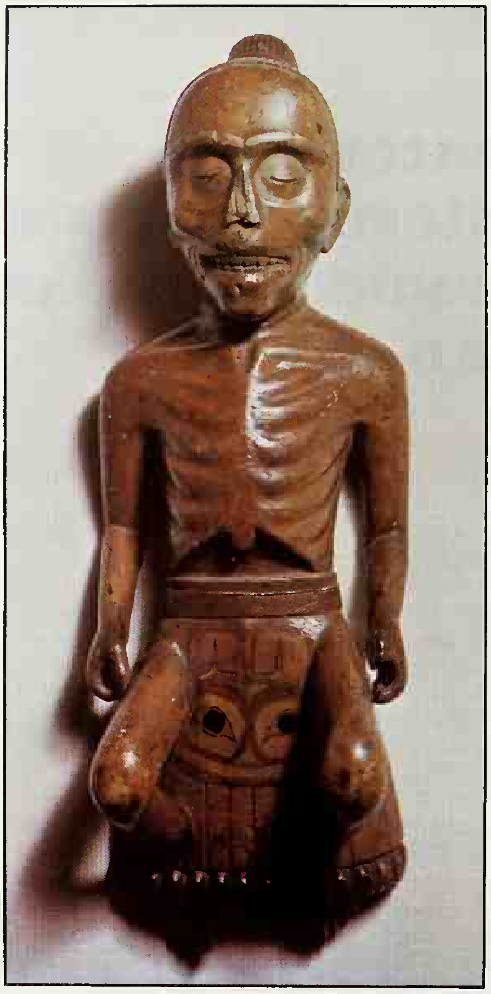
which man learned and developed a pattern of behaviour based on that of the birds, animals and fish upon which he depended for food and, therefore, for life itself. Man in fact identified with a particular beast and was that beast in human form, having at some point shed the human form for that of the beast, and returned at a later point in time as a human endowed with the secrets, wisdom and powers of the beast. It was these beasts in addition to the human form that appeared usually in traditional stylized forms in the graphic arts and carvings.

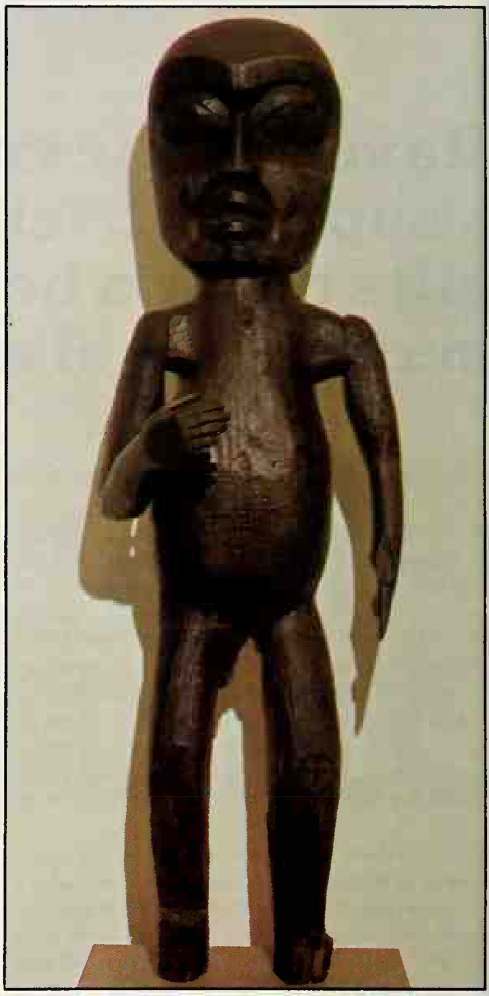
Raven as the creator was a supreme trickster (see TRICKSTER); whilst bestowing gifts on man he could at the same time make a fool of man and other mythological characters alike. A Haida myth of the origin of light tells how Raven, seeing the world in darkness and feeling sorry for man hunting for food, set off one day to the Chief of the Sky who kept the ball of daylight hidden to punish the people. To get into the house of the Chief of the Sky, he changed into a spruce needle that fell into the spring, and was swallowed by the Chief's daughter who had come to drink. Soon she became pregnant and a son was born who was Raven in disguise. The Chief was pleased and himself tended the child, who soon learned to crawl, moving from room to room in search of the ball of light. This he found, and began to cry 'Ball, Ball' until eventually the Chief reluctantly and on the insistence of his advisers gave him the ball to play with. Each day he was given the ball, until the Chief and his advisers eventually gave up watching him. At this he rolled it to the door, turned himself back into Raven and flew back to the people, breaking open the ball and allowing the bright light to spread so that the people could see to hunt.

At the time of European contact and in the early fur trading period, the population of the seven major tribes – Kwakiutl, Tlingit, Tsimshian, Haida, Bella Coola, Nootka and Salish – was variously estimated at around



Bone pendant ornament inlaid with haliotis shell and shaped like a soul-trap, a box which the shamans of the Pacific North-West used for recovering souls that had escaped from their owners' bodies, causing them physical and mental illness





Right Haida wood carving representing a shaman who fell in the forest, broke both his legs and starved to death *Far right* Haida ancestor figure
Facing page Detail from a totem pole, from Bella Bella in British Columbia, showing a man clutched in the teeth of a monstrous beast. Totem posts illustrated the close connection between men and animals

British Museum/C. M. Dixon

70,000 people. Although linguistically each tribe was quite different, contact between them for trade, warfare, intermarriage and slave-taking resulted in an interchange of ideas and material culture along the entire Pacific coastline from south Alaska to northern California.

The seasons governed the activities of the people, spring and summer being the time for outdoor activities, particularly food gathering. Autumn was a time for travel, and winter confined the people to their villages when the social life was the dominant feature. From the sea and rivers they took fish, mostly salmon, for food. Wood for their houses, utensils and other goods came from the forests, together with animals for their clothing. From the same sources they also developed beliefs and customs which characterized the area culture.

They lived in small villages, mostly on the rivers and coastline, in large timber houses adorned with carved and painted decorative motifs that compare favourably with other cultures throughout the world. Their artistic ability covered all aspects of the material culture; canoes, furniture, clothing, tools, weapons and utensils carved and painted with traditional designs that blended into the form. Objects for religious, mythological or political purposes used designs originating from mythological beliefs which in turn originated from the environment.

In every society there was a mythical beginning, and on the North-West Coast all living things were thought to be equal and in balance, differing only in their appearance. Man was Salmon, Bear or Raven, for example, and conversely Salmon, Bear or Raven was Man. Clan names were claimed through descent from these creatures. The front of the house would be painted with the crest of the ancestral creature, as were the articles of daily and ceremonial use.

Season of Fun and Feasts

The cold, wet winter months confined the people to their own villages and houses, and were a time for ceremony, singing, dancing, initiation of the young, feasting, speeches and ritual. There were many dance societies, involving the use of ceremonial costumes and fantastic masks combined with a sense of theatre that demanded elaborate timing, staging and direction.

The prelude to this ceremonial season was marked with a gay carnival of feasting and fun, in which the people unwound and relaxed after a season of toil. It began with a memorial service for those who had died since the last season, and finished several days later, when the festivities were interrupted by a masked orator who announced that a new season began tomorrow and that life would again be a serious business. This heralded the beginning of the ceremonial season in earnest and the arrival of the spirits to prepare the novices for initiation.

The next day each novice would allegedly be taken away by a spirit, but was in fact confined to the dancing society house, from which all non-initiates were barred. There he was prepared and rehearsed for his entrance into the society with a short apprenticeship, on the completion of which all the village and visitors from surrounding villages were invited to witness his return from the spirit world.

The ceremony was dramatic, and often lasted several days. The novice entered, cried, danced and performed acts of magic, showing that he was possessed by the spirit. He was attended by assistants who helped him throughout and eventually quietened him until he had returned to human society. At the end of each day's performance a feast was held and gifts were distributed.

The various dance societies performed throughout the winter months, and a long pageant of drama, comedy and illusion ensued both inside and outside the houses. Houses were set up as theatres, with the use of curtains, the light of the central fire to create effects, tunnels under the floor and speaking tubes. Props such as a box with a false bottom, or a carved figure which was substituted for an initiate allegedly killed, then magically restored to life, were used.

Illusion and trickery were employed extensively. Beheadings, disappearances, voices from the air, sudden appearance of spirits or reappearances of the dead, walking on or handling fire, all were planned and rehearsed. At the public performance speakers, musicians, heralds and other specialists, along with the performers and dancers, played out their parts to convince the audience of the real presence of spirits and the supernatural.

By the end of the season, when all who had applied for membership to the societies had been initiated and food supplies had become low, final gifts and payments were distributed. Then the last songs and dances were performed and the orator warned that a new season would soon begin – the season of work, food gathering and travel.

The Potlatch Ceremony

The most important social event was the potlatch. Invariably associated with status, either of an individual, a clan or a village, it was an occasion for re-distribution of the wealth upon which the economy was based.

The occasions for such a ceremony were many; the raising of a totem pole for a dead chief, the introduction of a new chief, the coming of age of a relative, a marriage, the giving of a new rank or name, the use of a new crest or the raising of a new house. It was not uncommon for the planning and preparation to take many months or even years, for guests might amount to several hundreds and might stay for some weeks, requiring an abundance of food and gifts. The glory and prestige of the hosts depended upon the occasion's success.

The rank of the guests governed the importance of the gifts; carved and painted hests, dishes, baskets, clothing, jewellery nd even slaves were distributed in correct recedence. A rival chief might receive a anoe, while someone of low rank would eceive a token gift of a strip of cloth. The ifts were acquired for the potlatch in two vays, either by manufacture by the houseold members, or by redemption of loans, ften with accrued interest as high as 100 er cent. The distribution of the gifts and he loans created a credit system, and areful accounts were kept. In this way the otlatch became the basis of the economy.

Guests were invited by agents of the chief; hey were greeted by the host's family inging and dancing on the beach as they pproached. Each day, events varying in mportance would be featured, so that a potatch might include both a major event such s the raising of a totem pole, and a minor vent such as the naming of a child. There vould be dancing, singing, dramas and peeches, all the participants wearing their inest robes, head-dresses and jewellery, nd some gifts would be distributed each ay. On the final day, the grand climax of he occasion, the most valuable gifts would e given strictly in accordance with rank.

As a symbol of wealth, the copper also hanged hands at the potlatch, but usually s a result of pre-arranged bargaining. The nore a copper changed hands the greater its argaining value, and on occasion a chief night deliberately shatter his wealth by reaking the copper and giving it to a rival hief, who in turn was expected to destroy vealth or lose face. A broken copper could e riveted together and re-used, but lost its riginal bargaining power, which had to be e-established.

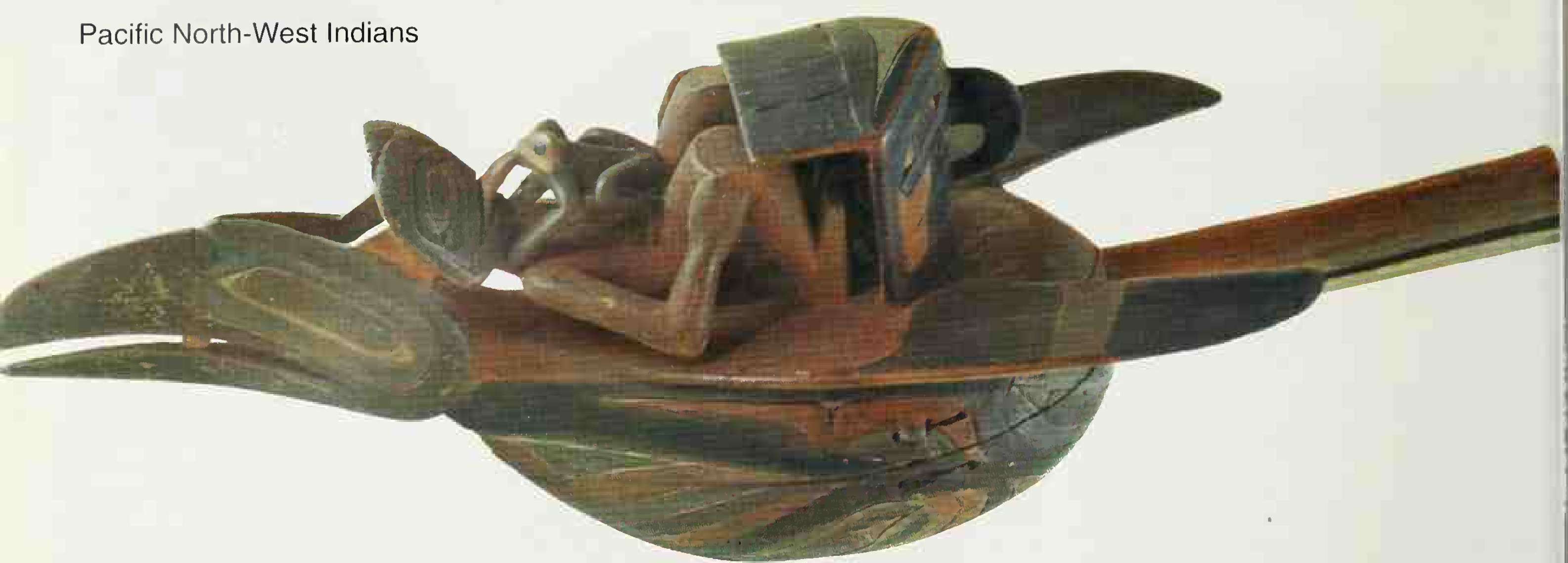
In 1921 the potlatch was prohibited by aw, although in remote areas the practice vas continued secretly; by the time the law vas repealed in 1951 much of the Indian vay of life had been destroyed.

Shaman with Magic Box

The shaman or medicine-man played an mportant part in the life of the village. He vas the healer, the contact and interpreter f the spirits. The position of shaman was enerally acquired by heredity, an uncle evealing his spirit to a nephew before he lied; or by a supernatural being possessing man (or occasionally a woman), and evealing itself to the human world through hat person. To become a successful shaman ook time in which to build a reputation and lemanded cleansing of the soul by fasting, bstaining from sexual intercourse, washing n the sea, drinking salt water to empty the tomach and fresh water afterwards.

Fasting and visions, followed by chanting nd the shaking of the rattles and beating of lrums, were regular parts of a shamanistic eremony, in which the shaman dressed ccording to the spirit speaking through him. He would probably wear a blanket voven of mountain goat's hair and cedar bark twine or a Hudson's Bay decorated rade blanket with leggings to match, a skin pron painted and hung with puffin beaks or deer hoofs that rattled in the dance, a crown and necklace of bear claws or carved horns. Accoutrements for the occasion

Horniman Museum/C. M. Dixon



Abbey Museum/Michael Holford

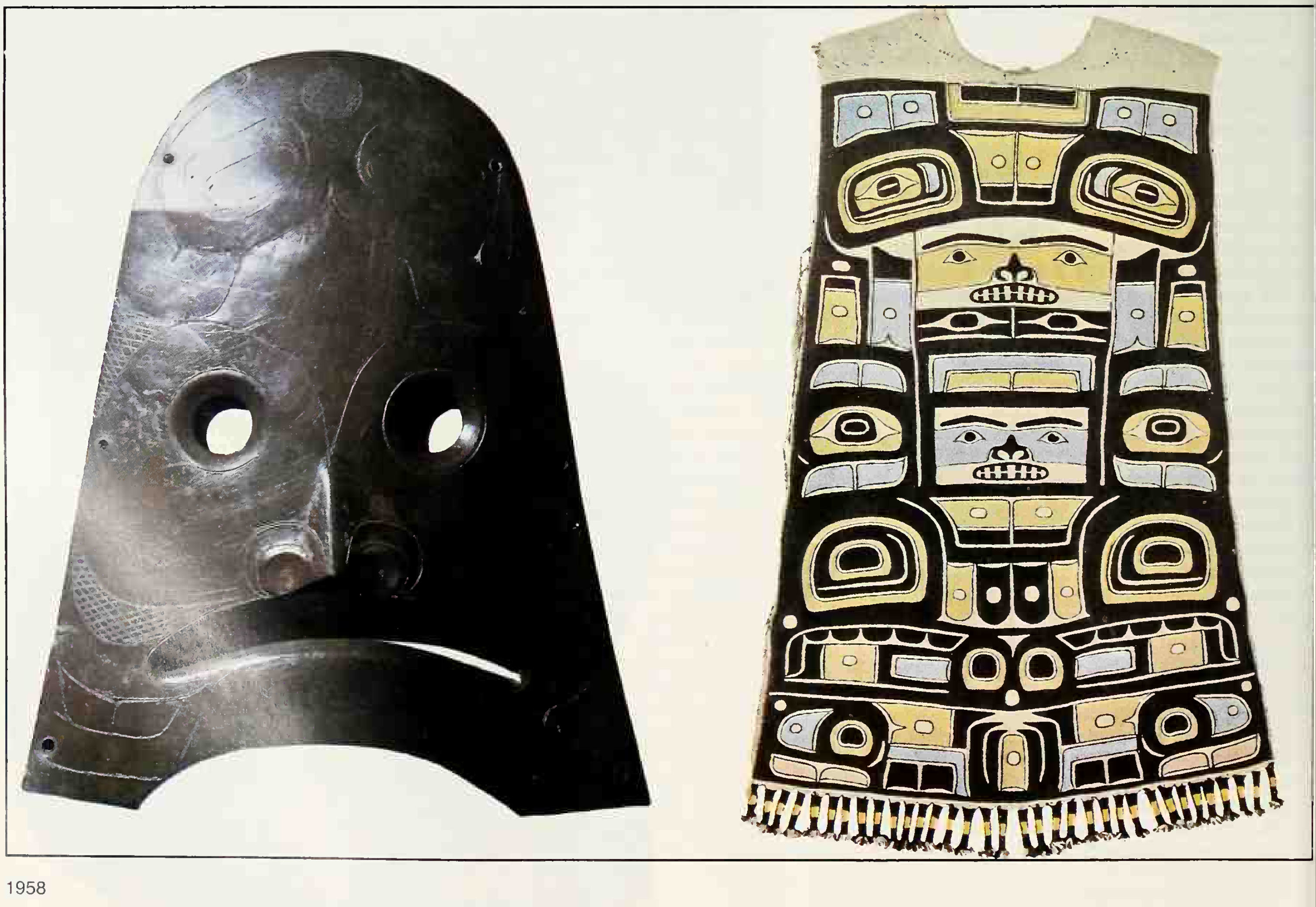
Animals played an important part in Indian beliefs, for man modelled his patterns of behaviour on animals, birds and fish, on which he depended for food and so for life itself *Above* Haida rattle in the form of a raven, bearing on its back a man, a frog and a thunderbird, a mythical creature which caused thunder by flapping its wings. Raven was a great trickster, and, in a Haida myth, stole the ball of daylight from the Chief of the Sky and brought it to the people to relieve them from darkness and give them light to hunt by. He did this by getting himself born as the Chief of the Sky's grandson and demanding the ball of daylight to play with *Below* The killer whale is a recurrent motif which appears in a copper mask (*left*) and a blanket (*right*). The hunting of whales involved special ceremonies

would consist of a rattle, usually round; a staff carved with the symbols of his visions and supernatural spirits; carved bone and ivory charms, carried or worn as a pendant; a soul-catcher, similar to the charms but actually a box, also in wood, often inlaid with abalone shell and with a removable stopper; and a painted drum.

Primarily concerned with healing, the shaman would visit the patient accompanied by an attendant. While the shaman sang over the patient, the attendant and people of the house would beat the drums and boards, until a vision or dream occurred to the shaman which would tell him the cause of illness. He usually attributed it to a supernatural object, or a natural object disorganized supernaturally. The shaman at this stage would be a supernatural being able to see what ordinary man could not, and would set about capturing the offending object, still accompanied by drums, rattles and chants. This would be done either by drawing it out of the body, or if it was the soul of the patient he would pursue it with his soul-catcher with the stopper removed until he could pop it into the magic box, replace the stopper and return it to the patient. For this service the shaman would be paid, but if the patient died the payment would be returned. (See also TOTEM.)

D.B. ALSFORD

FURTHER READING: I. Goldman, *The Mouth of Heaven* (Krieger, 1981); L. Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and its Derivatives* (AMS Press, 1979, c 1935).



'And in the end this Examinate was contented to give him her said Soul'; a formal agreement, renouncing one's soul to the Devil in return for his services, is an important element of the Faust legend and of European witchcraft

PACT

THE PACT WITH THE DEVIL bulks large in the history of witchcraft and also in Western literature. It is based on the belief that the Evil One hungers for human souls and that every Christian on whom he can fasten his talons is the spoil of a triumphant campaign in the war which he has waged against God and man ever since he was expelled from his high seat in heaven. He therefore offers his services to greedy magicians and grovelling witches in return for their souls and bodies. The formal agreement with him may be made verbally or in writing and, if in writing, may be signed in the sorcerer's blood, the blood which carries his life-energy and so conveys his life into the Devil's hands. The pact may last for the whole of the signer's natural life or for a limited number of years, at the end of which the Devil will come to claim his victim.

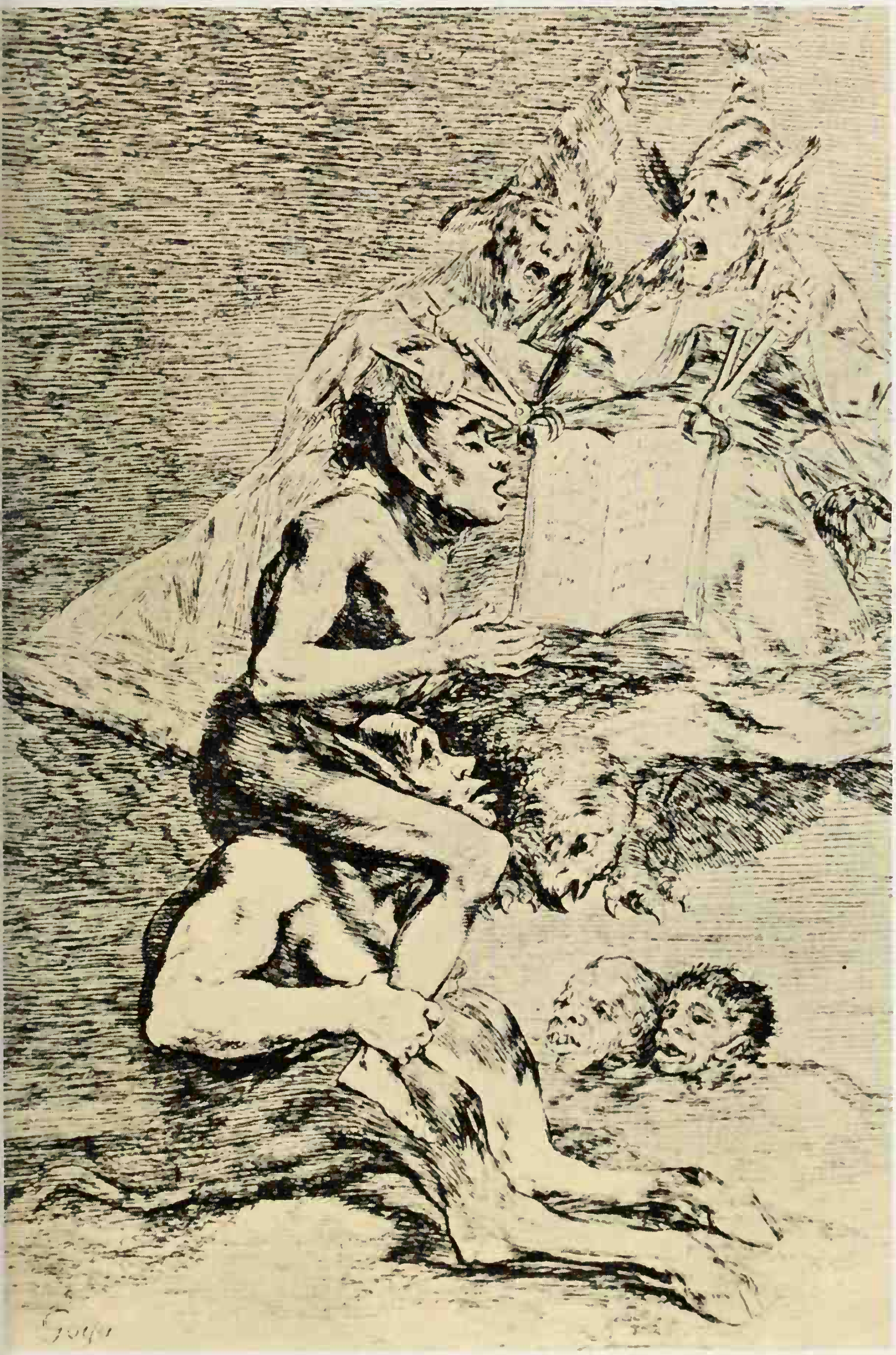
Scriptural authority for the possibility of a pact with the Prince of Darkness was found in Isaiah 28.15. This verse originally had nothing to do with any bargain with the Devil but the Vulgate translation suggested that it had: *percurrimus foedus cum morte et cum inferno fecimus pactum*, 'we have signed a treaty with death and with hell we have made a pact'. The early Christians tended to believe that magicians and diviners obtained their effects through the assistance of demons and the main impetus to belief in the Satanic pact came from St Augustine, who (in *De Doctrina Christiana*) condemned sorcery, astrology and other occult arts, 'from the pestiferous association of men with demons, as if formed by a pact of faithless and dishonourable friendship.' This passage, quoted by later authorities, became part of Church law.

Stories began to circulate about people who had sold themselves to the Devil. An early one is the tale of Proterius, a servant who fell hopelessly in love with his master's daughter. To win her, he appealed to the Devil and signed a paper renouncing his baptism and faith in Christ, and promising to share the horrors of hell with his new master. The Devil kept his part of the bargain by causing the girl to fall in love with Proterius but the latter was saved from hellfire by St Basil (bishop of Caesarea in Asia Minor, in the 4th century), who forced the Devil to return the signed paper. This story already has the element of 'having your cake and eating it' which is typical of many pact tales. The Devil demands a formal contract to make sure that the bargain cannot be broken but, although he keeps his part in it, the contract is broken through the intercession of some high spiritual authority and the signatory gets the best of both worlds.

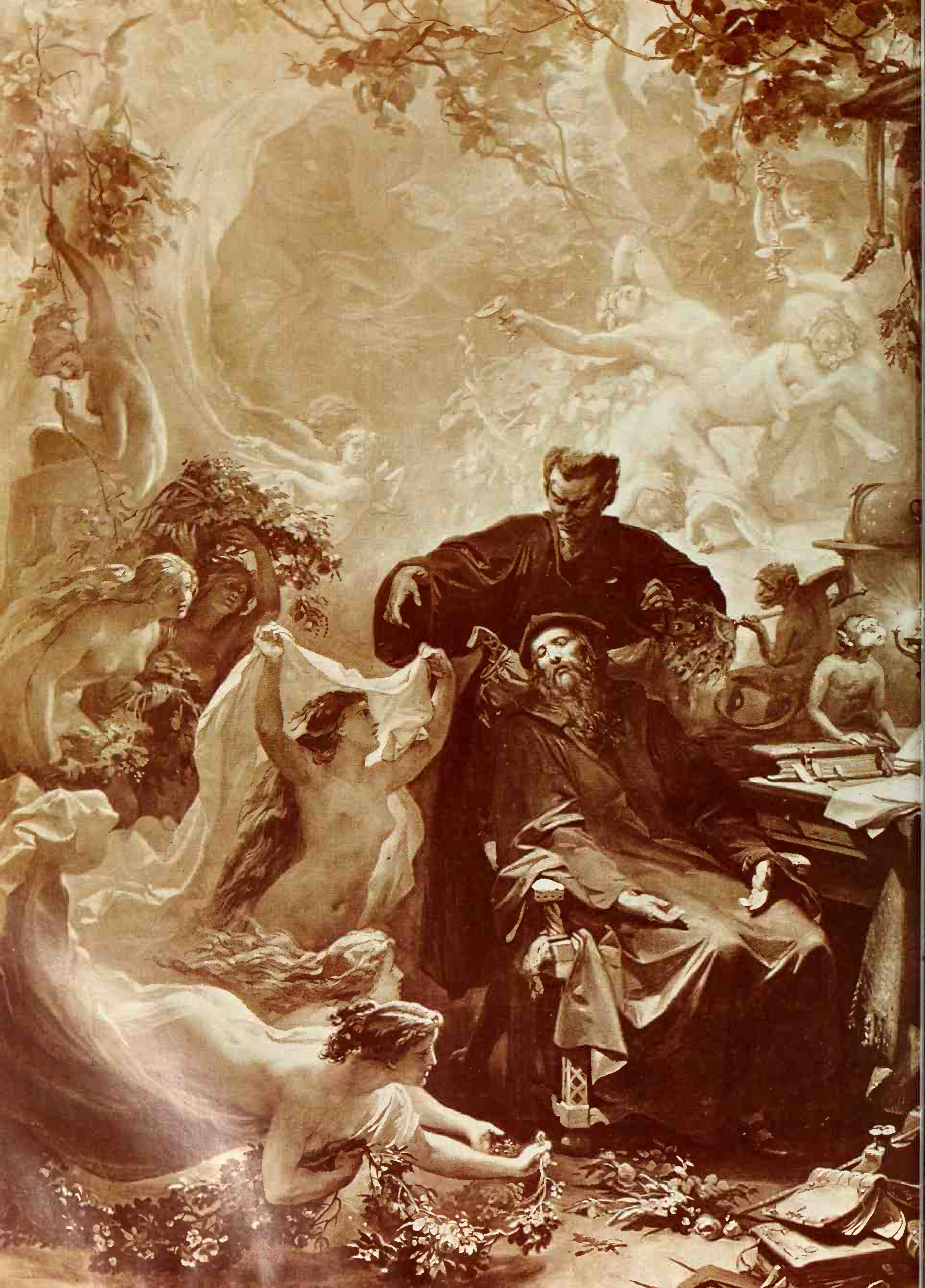
The same thing happens in the story of Theophilus of Adana, which has been traced back as far as the 6th century and was included in *The Golden Legend*, which was a 13th-century collection of legendary lives of saints extremely popular in the Middle Ages. Theophilus was a Christian who was persecuted by his bishop, and resented it. He consulted a wicked Jew, who took him in the middle of the night to a place where they saw a crowd of creatures in white robes. They carried candles and seated among them was their prince, the Devil, who demanded that Theophilus 'deny the son of Mary and those things which are offensive to me, and let him set down in writing that he denieth absolutely.' Theophilus did so, sealing the writing with wax (though by at least the 13th century he was said to have signed the statement in his own blood).

The fortunes of Theophilus spectacularly improved after this but he began to be depressed by the terrible prospect of an eternity in hell. He wailed and bemoaned himself so noisily that the Virgin Mary heard him. She took pity on him, obtained divine forgiveness for him and recovered the written pact. It was publicly burned after Theophilus had made an open confession.

In some stories the human signer of the pact intends trickery from the beginning. An example is the case of Roger Bacon, the 13th-century scientist and philosopher, who was said to have promised the Devil his soul unless he died neither in the Church nor out



Spanish sorcerer making a diabolic pact: a drawing by Goya



The most famous pact-signer of legend was Faust, who bargained his soul away to the Devil in return for superhuman power: Faust and Mephistopheles, an illustration to Goethe's *Faust* by A. von Kreling

of it. The Devil readily agreed but lost his prey because Bacon constructed a cell in the wall of a church, neither inside nor outside it, and took care to die there.

But the Devil is not always cheated and, psychologically, if you believe in him, perhaps, once summoned, he is not so easily got rid of. There was a well-known medieval legend that the brilliant Gerbert of Aurillac, who became Pope Sylvester II in 999, was a sorcerer who had signed a pact with Satan. A speaking brazen head, which he had made with the Devil's assistance, told him that he would not die before he celebrated Mass in Jerusalem. Gerbert naturally decided to go nowhere near the Holy Land but one day, in the year 1003, he was saying Mass in a church when he felt his strength draining away from him and sensed the presence of an army of gloating demons. He discovered that the church was dedicated to the Holy Cross of Jerusalem, and just had time to confess before he died.

Damnation of Faust

The most famous pact-signer of legend was Faust, who was said to have started the rumour that he was in league with the Devil, so as to gain prestige (see FAUST). There was a story that a friar begged Faust to mend his evil ways but that Faust refused to break the blood-pact he had signed: 'The Devil has honestly kept the promise that he made to me, therefore I will honestly keep the pledge that I made and contracted with him.' As the term of the pact drew near Faust despaired and lamented and on his last night on earth, soon after midnight, a great storm blew up and there was heard a whistling and a hissing like the sound of legions of snakes. Faust cried feebly for help but no one dared go to him. What was left of his body was found next morning in the yard, near the manure heap. His room was swimming in blood, brains and teeth, and his eyeballs were stuck to one wall.

The pact was important in prosecutions for witchcraft because it was evidence of heresy, of the repudiation of Christ and deliberate enlistment in the ranks of the Enemy. According to the *Dialogus Miraculorum* of Caesarius of Heisterbach (13th century), about the year 1200 two heretics came to Besançon, in eastern France, and worked all sorts of marvels and miracles. It was discovered that they carried written pacts with the Devil concealed in the skin of their armpits. The documents were removed and the heretics were burned to death.

In 1320 an inquisitor in Carcassonne, in southern France, was instructed to proceed against people who worshipped demons and gave them writings and made pacts with them. *Errores Gazariorum*, written in Savoy c 1450, says that becoming a witch involved swearing an oath of fidelity to the Devil, who then drew blood from the neophyte's left hand and wrote with it on paper, which he kept. In 1460 one of the Arras witches confessed to signing a pact in his own blood and Antoine Rose (1477) said she had kissed the Devil's foot in homage and renounced the Christian faith, and then the Devil put his mark on her (see FRENCH WITCHCRAFT).

The *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) says that when a new witch joins the cult, the Devil asks her 'whether she will abjure the Faith, and forsake the holy Christian religion and the worship of the Anomalous Woman (for so they call the Most Blessed Virgin Mary), and never venerate the sacraments.' The new witch duly swears this with upraised hand, but then the Devil tells her that this is not enough, for she must give herself to him, body and soul, for ever. The *Malleus* also quotes from an earlier work, John Nider's *Formicarius* (c 1435), which says that the new recruit swore 'to deny the Christian religion, never to adore the Eucharist, and to tread the Cross underfoot whenever she could do so secretly.' From the same source the *Malleus* quotes a Swiss witch as saying that the neophyte entered a church on a Sunday with the leaders of the group and in their presence denied Christ and the Church: 'and then he must pay homage to the Little Master, for so and not otherwise do they call the Devil'.

Evidently, a written pact signed in blood was not always necessary, though a Basque witch burned in 1619 showed Pierre de Lancre the pact she had made with the Devil, scrawled in menstrual blood. A written pact which is still preserved is the one allegedly signed by Urbain Grandier (see LOUDUN NUNS) and produced against him in evidence at his trial in 1634, together with a reply signed by the chief princes of hell. The pact reads:

> My lord and master Lucifer, I acknowledge you as my god and prince, and promise to serve and obey you while I live. And I renounce the other god and Jesus Christ, the saints, the Roman Church and all its sacraments, and all prayers by which the faithful might intercede for me; and I promise to do as much evil as I can and to draw all others to evil; and I renounce chrism and baptism, and all the merits of Jesus Christ and his saints; and if I fail to serve and adore you, paying you homage three times a day, I give you my life as your own.

In reply the lords of darkness promised him a life full of carnal delights for 20 years, after which he would join them in hell.

In England, Anne Chattox said that 'a thing like a Christian man, for four years together, did sundry times come to this Examinate, and requested this Examinate to give him her Soul, and in the end this Examinate was contented to give him her said Soul, she being then in her own house, in the Forest of Pendle.' The phrasing of this confession suggests another source of the firm belief in the pact, the tendency of lawyers to rejoice in set forms and due process, and their assumption that the Father of Lies must do so too.

The pact has little importance in the textbooks of ceremonial magic. The *Grand Grimoire* (see GRIMOIRE) does include an unimpressive ritual for making a pact with a subordinate demon named Lucifuge Rofocale in order to borrow money from him, but the grimoires are mainly concerned to dominate evil spirits, to quell them and reduce them to obedience, and the mentality of the sorcerer who bargains his soul away to obtain the Devil's services is foreign to their view of the overwhelming power of the master magician.

RICHARD CAVENDISH

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PADRE PIO

FRANCESCO FORGIONE, the celebrated stigmatic affectionately revered by multitudes of faithful Roman Catholics as Padre Pio, was born in 1887 in Pietrelcina, an out-of-the-way little town in southern Italy. The man who was later to be crassly saluted by the *National Review* as 'the hottest thing in mysticism in the twentieth century' grew up in humble circumstances as the son of a farmer, and suffered from frequent bouts of ill health. It was realized early on that he had a vocation for the Church and he joined the Capuchins in 1903. Ordained priest in 1910, he spent most of his adult life in the friary at San Giovanni Rotondo on the slopes of Monte Gargano, near Foggia.

As a young friar Padre Pio was frequently ill and also alternated between intense spiritual exaltation and profound depression – not an uncommon experience among mystics. He prayed earnestly to participate in Jesus's suffering on the cross and in 1910 he appeared with puncture wounds in his hands, which he said Jesus and the Virgin Mary had given him in a vision. He was embarrassed by the wounds, which eventually disappeared, but they reappeared a year later, accompanied by pain in the feet and side. Again the wounds vanished, but now Padre Pio began to experience diabolical visions, in which he was menaced by a monstrous black cat, saw alluring naked women, was attacked by demons and beaten by torturers. Sometimes the blows left visible bruises.

It was in 1916 that he joined the small community at San Giovanni Rotondo. He suffered from vomiting attacks and severe fevers, with temperatures high enough to break the thermometer. There were reports of his being seen in two places at once and of his seeing ghosts. He was 31 when, in 1918, alone in the chapel, he saw a vision of the crucified Christ, radiating shafts of light that pierced the friar's hands and feet. He came round lying on the floor, bleeding from the five wounds of crucifixion in his hands, feet and side. A photograph taken in 1919 shows the marks of the stigmata in his hands. He found them very painful, and in normal circumstances he kept them covered by mittens.

The Church, as is its custom, viewed Padre Pio's stigmata with conspicuous reserve. As word spread of what had happened in the remote friary, however, excitement mounted. So many letters arrived that a special room had to be set aside for dealing with them, and pilgrims appeared in numbers which swiftly swelled into thousands. When Padre Pio's clothes were sent out to be laundered, they were cut up and sold. Tradesmen hawked pieces of cloth smeared with chicken or rabbit blood as relics stained with the blood of the holy man's wounds. People pushed aggressively into the friary, carried off chairs they thought he had sat on, and tried to pull the clothes off his back.

It appeared that Padre Pio had supernatural powers of healing and prophecy, which did not diminish the excitement. The touch of a glove he had worn cured a woman of stomach cancer in 1921, and there were other apparently miraculous cures. Many people testified to the fragrance emanating from his wounds, sometimes described as like violets or other flowers. He seemed to have extra-sensory powers, often knowing things about people or events at a distance which he could not have discovered by normal means. There were more stories of bilocation. On one occasion, for instance, he was found in his room, unconscious and shivering violently with cold, though it was a warm day. It was later reported that at that same time he had been hearing the confession of a dying man up in the snow on the mountain.

Small, squat and bearded, known for his matter-of-factness and practical common sense, Padre Pio was not comfortable with the awe in which he was held. He had a strong sense of humour and a talent for mimicry and practical jokes. He died aged 81 at San Giovanni Rotondo in 1968 and more than 100,000 people attended his funeral, many of them in tears. Pilgrims still visit his tomb.

Few, if any, physical mediums have been so thoroughly investigated as this peasant girl, whose extraordinary paranormal powers many eminent investigators endorsed but many others challenged as fraudulent

EUSAPIA PALLADINO

Harry Price Library

THE DAUGHTER OF ITALIAN PEASANTS, Eusapia Palladino was born in 1854 at Minervo-Murge, near Bari in Italy. Her mother died at her birth and when she was 12 years old her father was murdered by brigands. Taken as a nursery-maid into the household of a Neapolitan family who were interested in Spiritualism, she soon showed signs of abnormal gifts. From then on her career led from one scientific investigation to another, almost up to her death.

Her phenomena consisted of the occurrences common to physical mediums. While she was said to be securely held or fastened, there would occur raps and bangs on the furniture and walls of the room; touches on the bodies of the investigators and telekinetic movements (movements without contact – see PSYCHOKINESIS) of various objects both inside and outside the cabinet. (A cabinet in this sense means simply a space enclosed within drawn curtains near the medium in which, so it is alleged, the medium's 'power' is accumulated.) The cabinet curtains would sometimes bulge out and materializations would appear, looking like the outline of 'hands' and 'heads' (known in psychical research circles as pseudopods), together with other ectoplasmic forms. There were also isolated reports of fully-formed hands and even fully-formed phantoms.

Hereward Carrington, the American investigator, records an occasion when 'Eusapia asked me to enter the cabinet and hold the small table within it. It was light enough for me to see that nothing was opposite me, even though the curtains were more or less closed; yet some invisible being or force was strong enough to throw both the table and myself out of the cabinet completely – landing on the floor outside.'

The most notorious feature of Eusapia's strange personality was her incessant resort to trickery. Nevertheless, one of her most outstanding investigators, the French physiologist Professor Richet, stated that, in spite of her many frauds, 'all the men of science, without exception, who experimented with her were in the end convinced that she produced genuine phenomena'. No other medium so well illustrates the difficulties and complexities of physical mediumship, and the history of her relations with the Society for Psychical Research can best demonstrate this.

The S.P.R.'s connection with Eusapia began through Professor Richet, who maintained a materialistic outlook in spite of his belief in the validity of paranormal phenomena. A great deal about his experiments with Eusapia will be found in his book *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*. In it Richet records that he had close on 200 seances with Eusapia. 'Even if there were no other medium than Eusapia in the world,' he wrote, 'her manifestations would suffice to establish scientifically the reality of telekinesis and ectoplasmic forms... When I recall the precautions that all of us have taken, not once but twenty, a hundred, or even a thousand times, it is inconceivable that we should have been deceived on all these occasions.'

'Deliberate Fraud'

In 1894 Richet invited two S.P.R. members F.W.H. Myers (see MYERS) and Sir Oliver Lodge, to take part in experiments with Eusapia at his villa on the Ile de Roubaud, a tiny island off the Mediterranean coast. On their return to England Lodge and Myers reported their complete acceptance of Eusapia's paranormal powers.

There was a disturbing sequel, however. Dr Richard Hodgson, who had established himself as the leading S.P.R. expert on fraudulent practices, had gone to America some seven years earlier to become Secretary to the American S.P.R. and to take control there of the work with the famous mental medium Mrs Piper (see PIPER). While in Boston he had read Lodge's report on Eusapia and wrote back to the *Journal* challenging the testimony offered by Richet, Lodge and Myers, and stating that the experimental conditions described were inadequate to prevent fraud. Indeed, he indicated exactly how he thought such fraud would have been possible – by Eusapia freeing a hand or foot without detection by the investigators holding her.

Shaken by this criticism, the Council of the S.P.R. invited Eusapia to visit England for renewed experiments, which Hodgson came from America to attend. The result of 20 seances held in Cambridge established Eusapia's fraud, in the unanimous opinion of the participants, by means of exactly such a method of evading control of a hand or foot as Hodgson had postulated. Even Myers, who had been so completely convinced a short while before, stated that he could not now doubt that they had observed 'conscious and deliberate fraud of a kind which must have needed long practice to bring it to its present level of skill'. Lodge, however, remained unshaken and, in spite of Eusapia's admitted fraud at Cambridge, stuck to his insistence on the genuineness of the phenomena he had witnessed on the Ile de Roubaud.

Anxious to preserve the Society's reputation and to keep clear of the many frauds only too common among physical mediums, Professor Sidgwick, leader of the S.P.R., issued a pronouncement. It had been 'placed beyond reasonable doubt that the frauds discovered by Dr Hodgson at Cambridge had been systematically practised by Eusapia for years. In accordance, therefore, with our established custom, I propose to ignore her performances for the future as I ignore those of other persons engaged in the same mischievous trade.'

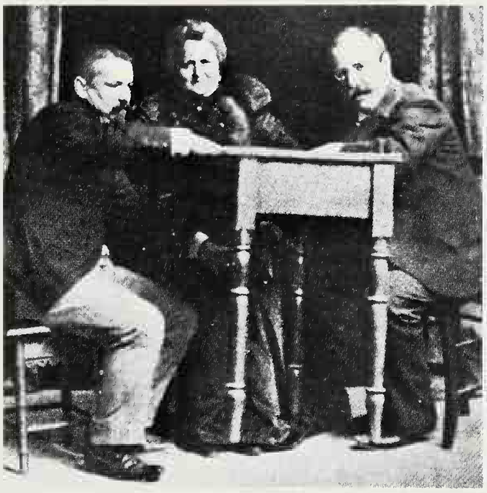
How had her fraud been detected? The answer was: by Hodgson freeing one of Eusapia's hands in order to observe just exactly how she eluded control. The adverse report which followed caused considerable dissatisfaction among European investigators. It was argued that it had always been recognized, by all investigators, that Eusapia would cheat, given the opportunity, and that Hodgson by his deliberate avoidance of proper control had virtually encouraged her trickery.

Supernormal Force

In 1908, 13 years later, the S.P.R. unbent and a committee was appointed to investigate Eusapia anew. By this time Sidgwick, Myers and Hodgson had all died. Mrs Sidgwick, the then President of the Society, explained the change of front on the grounds that in view of the very thorough investigation of the medium abroad, the Council wished to collect further material in order to form an independent judgement.

The 'Naples Committee' consisted of the three most critical men, the most experienced in the investigation of physical mediums, in methods of conjuring and in detection of fraud, that the S.P.R. could muster. They were the Hon. Everard Feilding, Hon. Secretary of the Society, W. W. Baggally, an S.P.R. Council member, and Hereward Carrington, who was for some years Research Investigator of the American S.P.R. They proceeded to Naples in what they described as a thoroughly sceptical if not hostile frame of mind, resulting from years of detecting fraud. But all three were converted to an emphatic belief in Eusapia's phenomena, brought about by the stringent conditions in which the phenomena were observed. Their subsequent report records 'Eusapia was not detected in fraud in any one of the 470 phenomena that took place at the eleven seances.' They were 'compelled to ascribe Eusapia's phenomena to some supernormal cause... Our general opinion of these phenomena is that they were due to some supernormal force resident in the organism of Eusapia, though some few of them would appear to point to the action of an independent energy.'

Eusapia Palladino apparently levitating a table, while two investigators hold her hands and knees: it was recognized that she would resort to trickery whenever she was allowed to, but three experienced and critical researchers were driven to the conclusion that she could also produce 'supernormal' phenomena


Harry Price Library

But the vicissitudes of Eusapia's life were by no means over. In 1909 the converted Carrington arranged to take the medium to America and there occurred the most disastrous episodes of her entire career. In a series of seances, in far from satisfactory conditions, including an investigation by professors at Columbia University, she was caught resorting to all her old tricks. Denunciations ensued, the Press took it up and turned it into a sensation, and challenges and wagers were bandied back and forth. Carrington, however, maintained to the end his own conviction of the genuine character of Eusapia's phenomena in the right conditions.

In a disastrous setting of untrained and ill-assorted sitters and Press publicity, Eusapia's career was virtually at an end. In the eight remaining years before her death in 1918 she gave some recorded seances, but they were mostly negative and could not compare with her earlier powers.

The vast literature on Eusapia is full of interesting comments on her strange psychology. Certainly no more intriguing and illuminating example can be found for studying the problems of physical mediumship.

(See also MEDIUMS; PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.)

K.M. GOLDNEY

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Spectrum Colour Library

Among Christians the carrying of palm fronds is a recollection of the day when Jesus entered Jerusalem and the people strewed his path with them: palms scattered on the ground in a Corpus Christi procession at Malaga in Spain

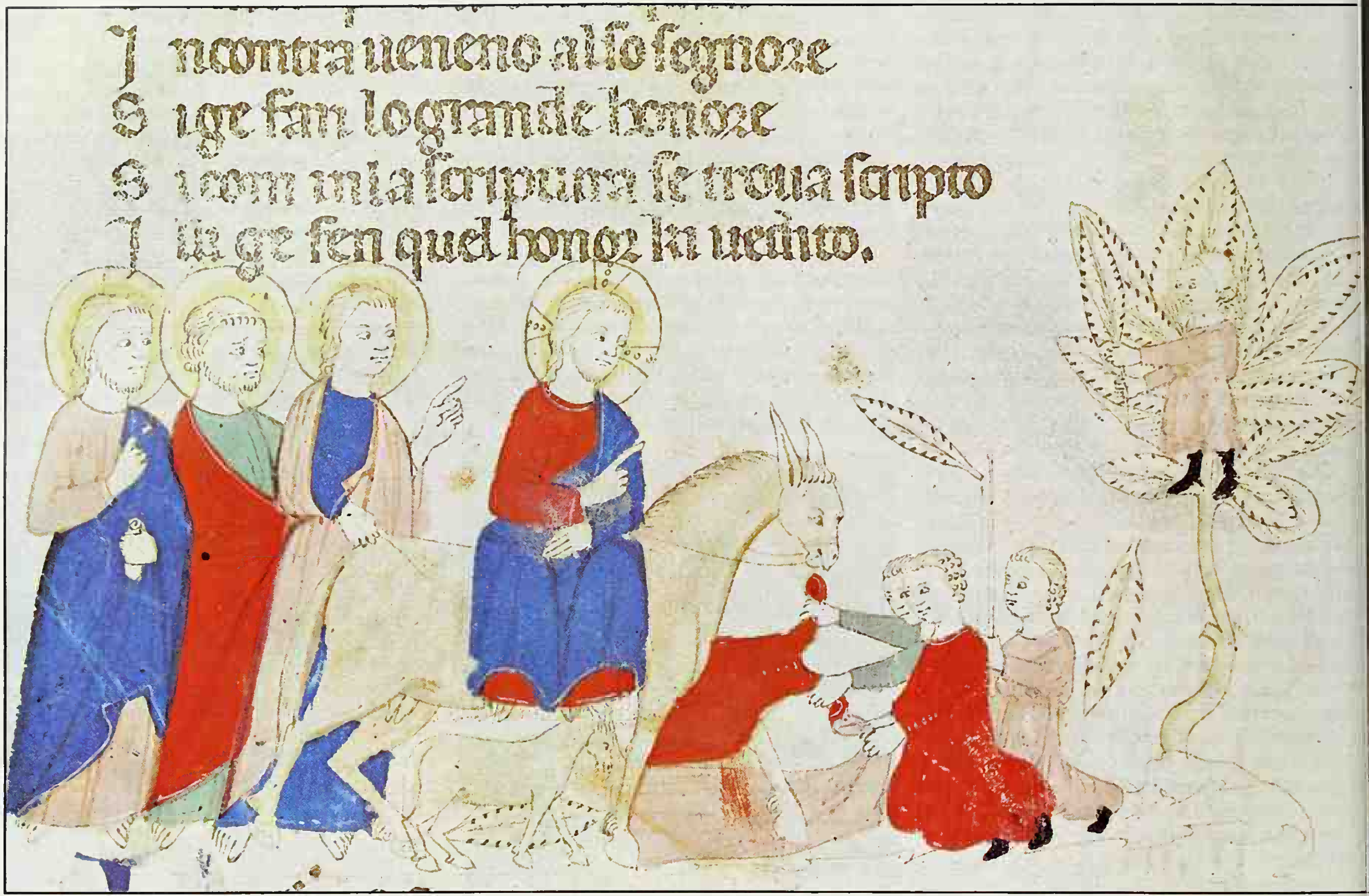
PALM

THERE IS an Arab saying that the palm has as many uses as there are days in the year, and certainly anyone who has been to North Africa will know how important the date palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*, is to those who dwell in desert regions.

Its fruits are eaten and remain edible for a long time; oil can be produced from the kernels, which also provide food for livestock; an intoxicating drink can be made from the sap; the leaves are used for thatching, walling and fencing, for matting and baskets; rope is made from the stringy material surrounding the crown; and when the tree dies its trunk provides timber.

It is also a very distinctive tree and it became a stylistic pattern for columns in ancient Egypt, and relief embellishment further north, as on the temple of Solomon: 'He carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees' (I Kings 6.29).

The word Phoenicia used by the Greeks and Romans meant 'land of palms', and some coins of ancient Tyre and Sidon show this tree. Many Jewish coins do the same, the first being that issued in 175 BC, in the


In contra ueneno al so segnore
Sige san lo grande honore
Si com in la scriptura se troua scripto
Ili ge sen quel honor ka uechuto.

Christ's entry into Jerusalem, from a 14th century manuscript: the palm was also traditionally one of the four woods from which the cross was made, and was said to have formed the piece to which Christ's hands were nailed

time of Judas Maccabeus. Later, after the conquest of the Jews and the overthrow of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD, the Emperor Vespasian struck a coin which showed a woman weeping beneath a palm, so much was the tree the emblem of Palestine. Now, however, palms are scarce in the Levant and Palestine.

The Bible relates how 'branches of palm trees' (the huge individual branch-like fronds) were carried on special occasions, as in Revelation 7.9, where they become a symbol of martyrdom: 'And after this I looked, and behold, a great multitude . . . standing before the throne . . . clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands'. It was in the time of Judas Maccabeus, when the Temple was restored, that it first became customary to carry palm fronds in procession. The fronds – known as 'lulab' or 'lulav' – would be interlaced with myrtle on the right side and citron on the left, and after being carried at the Feast of the Tabernacles were preserved at home where they brought luck and protection in the coming year. In an earlier palm festival the Jews had made cabins of the fronds outside their townships, in which they passed a holiday week notable for family reunions, in memory of the 40 years of camp life in the wilderness, before they reached the Promised Land. Among Christians the carrying of fronds – and the English 'palm', which is the pussy willow – on Palm Sunday is a recollection of that day when Jesus entered Jerusalem and the people waved palms and strewed his path with them. Today in many Christian Mediterranean countries the palm frond is represented by a cross of palm pieces carried in the hand or stuck into one's hat.

Early Christian martyrs believed that angels brought palm fronds to carry their souls up to heaven. It later became the custom to make a fire of palm fronds on All Souls' Day; the smoke was supposed to assist souls released from purgatory to reach heaven.

Emblem of Victory

Pilgrims would often carry a staff of palm and were consequently known as palmers. This explains Helena's question in Shakespeare's *All's Well That End's Well* (Act III, Sc. 5) 'Where do the palmers lodge, I do beseech you?' The palm was also a symbol of victory, as is apparent in a number of other Shakespearean quotations. In *Coriolanus* (Act V, Sc. 3) Volumnia says in scorn:

> And bear the palm for having bravely shed
> Thy wife and children's blood . . .

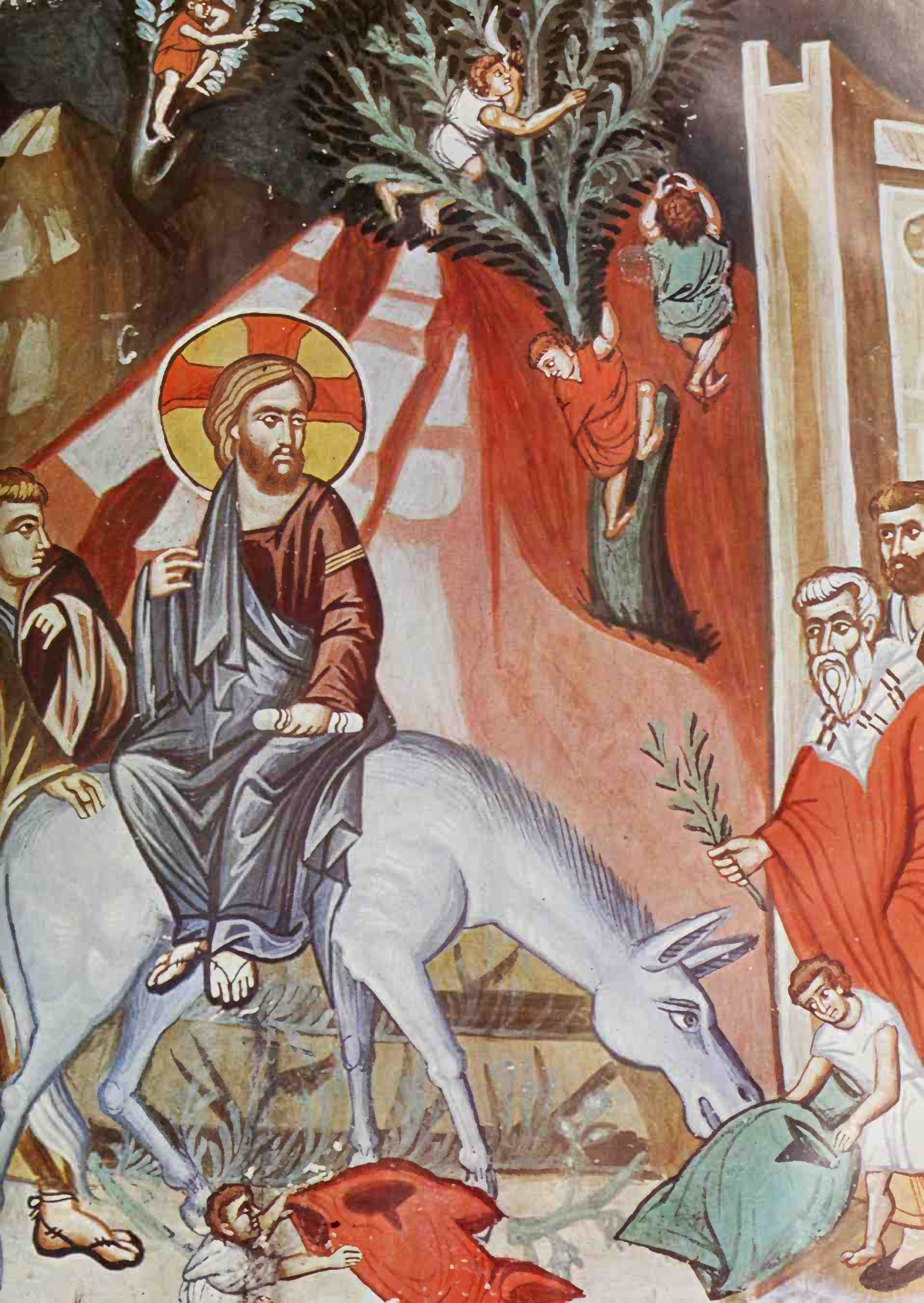
There is a Christian myth linking the palm with St Christopher. Originally named Offero, this giant of a man was told by a hermit that if he wished to see Christ, he should assist the weak. Offero made himself responsible for carrying people over a dangerous river, using a palm staff as a support. One stormy night a child asked to be carried over. Offero found his small burden becoming heavier and heavier but managed to stagger across. Then the child bid him thrust his staff into the ground; and when he had done so, it put out leaves and fruits. At this, Offero, realizing whom he had carried, became converted; he changed his name to Christ-ofero, or Christopher, meaning 'Christ-bearer'.

The palm figures in another legend of the life of Christ, for it was supposed to be one of the four trees from which the cross was made as specified in an old verse:

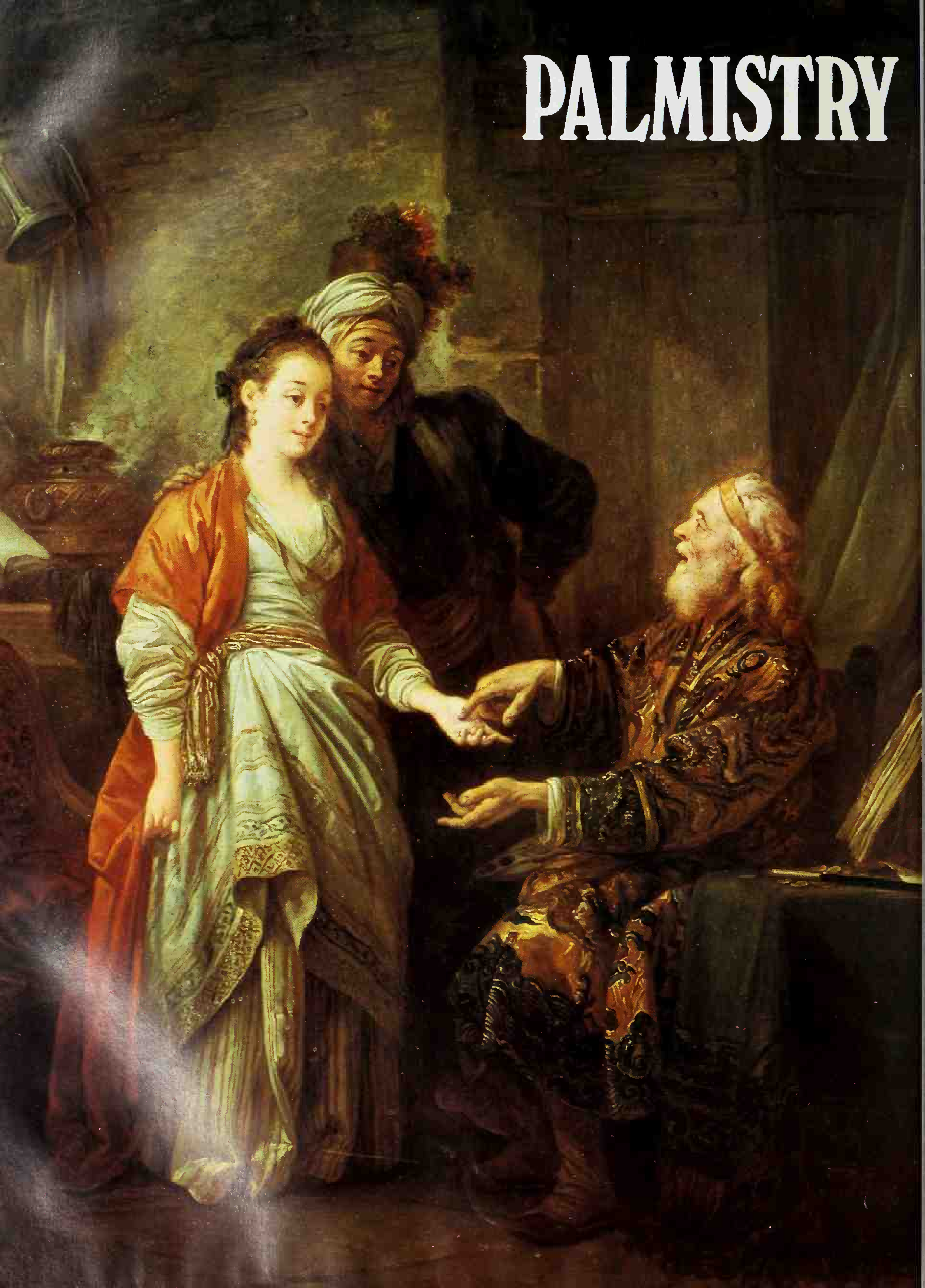
> Nailed were His feet to Cedar, to Palm
> His hands,
> Cypress His body bore, title on Olive
> stands.

In countries where it was not a native the palm became valuable as a talisman: a piece of its wood or leaf would subdue evil spirits; a cross made of its leaves kept off lightning; fever would abate if the leaf was chewed.

Palm was said to keep mice from grain stores, and even to be a specific for fleas. To do this one had to place a palm leaf behind the portrait of the Virgin Mary on Easter Sunday at the first stroke of the resurrection bell, and say: 'Depart, all animals without bones'. This kept off fleas (and presumably lice) for a year – a great boon in former times. To dream of a palm tree means luck and success, especially if the tree is in flower. In the language of flowers, palm stood for victory.



PALMISTRY



The palmist stresses the importance of the markings and formation of the hands as indications of character, and believes that in these the past and future may be read

The belief that man's destiny is imprinted on his hands has a long history; prophets of the Old Testament believed that God 'set his seal' on men in this way, and even today it is argued that an accurate interpretation of the configurations of the hand can enable a man to recognize, and change, his fate

HANDS HAVE FASCINATED man since prehistoric times. Able to shape tools, make impressions in clay and trace signs in the dust, they must have seemed magically endowed, possessions that gave him a power over Nature that was denied to animals.

Later, man came to regard his hands not only as instruments of power, but also as mirrors of his destiny, a prehistoric book of fate in which he could discern, through an intuitive sensibility, more than his reason could make known to him. The first steps had been taken in the art of palmistry or chiromancy, a method of divination through studying the lines, mounts, valleys and other configurations on the palms, together with the shape, size and texture of the hands themselves.

A highly developed subject in India, which was perhaps its birthplace, palmistry was known in China, Tibet, Persia, Mesopotamia and Egypt, and flowered, more or less in its present form, in Greece. The Athenian philosopher Anaxagoras (500–428 BC) is said to have practised the art, saying, 'The superiority of man is owing to his hands.' Aristotle (384–322 BC) added that 'The hand is the organ of organs, the active agent of the passive powers of the whole system.'

The art still continues to flourish throughout the East. The Arabs, Chinese and many gypsies add solistry, or foot reading, to the more usual hand reading while onychomancy, simply studying the finger-nails (see FINGERS), is held to be enough by some people. It is probable that graphology, assessing character by studying handwriting, was an offshoot of palmistry. During the Renaissance these skills were considered a legitimate part of natural science, even when condemned by the Church. Nor did ecclesiastical prohibitions prevent many dignitaries of the Church from making use of all occult methods, black or white.

The belief that the hands are 'mirrors of destiny', in which a person's character and future are reflected, has flourished for centuries; 18th-century painting by Jean-Baptiste Le Prince

Mind and Body

The tradition that every line, star, point, cross, square, island and triangle in the hand is significant has therefore been perpetuated for countless generations, and the modern palmist, like other practitioners of the art before him, believes that there is a relationship between these physical features and man's nature. The claim by the 20th century German psychologist Ernst Kretschmer that there is a connection between physique and psychotic illness, and the increasing conviction among medical men of the psychosomatic nature of many diseases, supports the view that there is an interaction between body and mind.

The occultist goes further and says that there is a constant interplay, not only between the physical and the mental, but also between these and the spiritual. The palmist stresses the importance of the apparently haphazard markings and formations of the hands as indications of character, but believes in addition that, in these, the past and the future may be read.

There are those who regard palmistry as a rational science, and others who believe that clairvoyance must be brought to bear when an interpretation is made. A number of ancient books concerning this art exist, and many modern ones, both profound and popular. There are also societies which instruct students in palmistry.

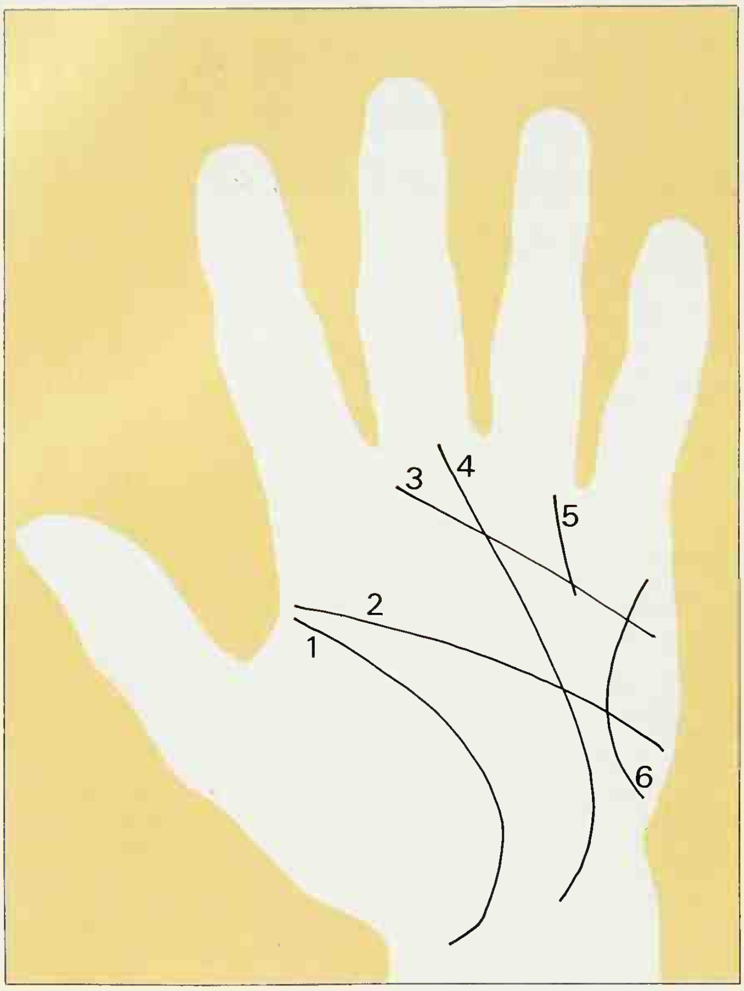
The superficial reader of hands is content to flatter the person who consults him by stressing such virtues as courage, straightforwardness and warmth of heart; he speaks of sadnesses experienced only in the past, and paints a picture of a successful and happy future. This is generally all that is obtained from the gypsy woman who reads palms while begging for a silver coin. But every now and then, a passing gypsy will suddenly be visited with the gift of seeing into the future, and will be impelled to give a quick reading that may prove startlingly true. She will refuse to take a penny for it. Materialists will dismiss the matter as a hoax, but it is unlikely that such an old and trusted art is without some foundation in truth. It is interesting that today, when serious palmists take impressions of the hands they read, and the findings are typewritten and kept for verification, striking accuracy of both character-reading and prediction is sometimes obtained.

Palmistry may be studied under three headings. Firstly, correlation between the hands and physical or mental states might be called medical or therapeutic chiromancy, and some palmists are extremely good at diagnosing the nature of an illness. Secondly, correlation between the hands and character could be called psychotherapeutic chiromancy. The palmist will describe the consultant's character in detail, praise the good qualities and point out the weak ones. Thirdly, there is correlation between the hands and the past, the present and the future. This is divinatory chiromancy. What the palmist has to say about the past may be verified, the present is of course clear, but that which is predicted for the future may well be taken with several grains of salt.

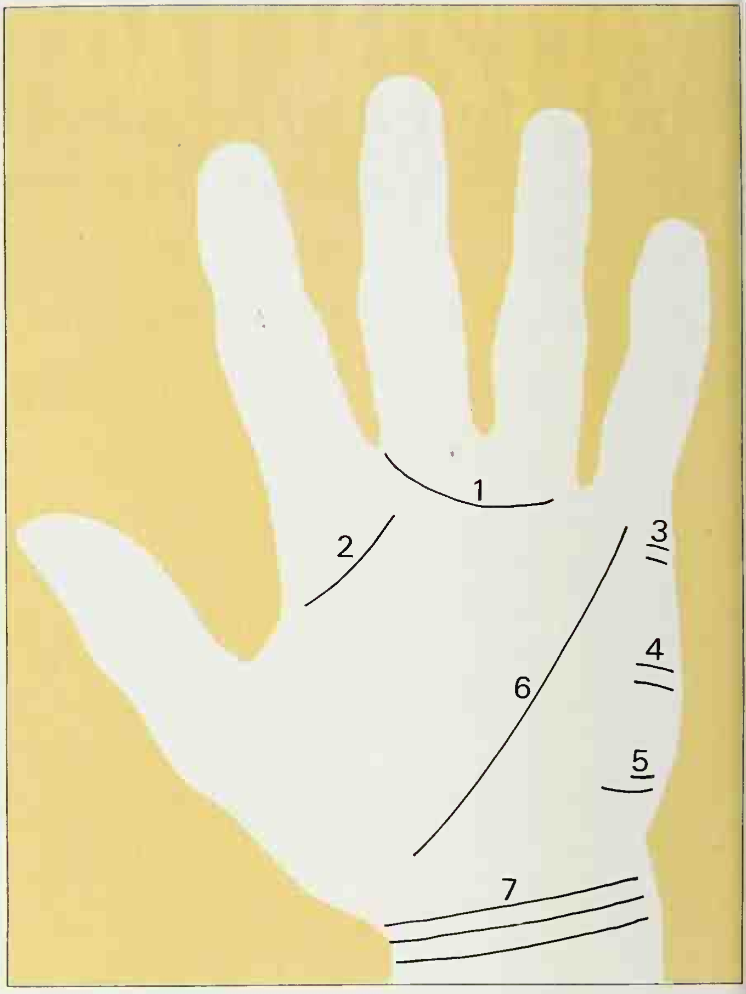
The danger so far as prediction is concerned is that the consultant may accept that a tragedy is inevitable and may allow this to prey on his mind. Some people are so suggestible that they themselves may unconsciously bring about a predicted disaster. Therefore a high-minded palmist will never foretell misfortune or death without very carefully qualifying the reading and showing how the tragedy may be averted.

When preparing to read a hand it is necessary to be analytical, and each line, mount and so on should be described separately; but in the actual reading it is essential to interrelate all these features. Each line should be studied in conjunction with all other markings on the hand, or the reading will be out of focus. In addition, both hands must be brought into relation with each other, for the left represents a person's inherited disposition, while the right reflects what he makes of himself; that is, his positive or negative reactions to his fate.

The titles and placing of the lines, bracelets, mounts, valleys or plains, of stars, points, squares, triangles and islands, must be mastered by the student of palmistry. The diagrams opposite and on the following page give only a brief indication of their significance; a detailed study of palmistry is necessary to appreciate the vast amount of information that may be obtained from reading hands.



THE PRINCIPAL LINES
1. ***The Life Line:*** *General picture of the subject's destiny and the dates of outstanding events.*
2. ***The Head Line:*** *Intellectual capacities.*
3. ***The Heart Line:*** *All that concerns the sentiments.*
4. ***The Fate or Destiny Line:*** *This should be checked carefully with the 'life line' as it indicates the subject's pattern of life.*
5. ***The Apollo or Sun Line:*** *Artistic trends, chances of success.*
6. ***The Intuition Line:*** *Insight.*



THE SECONDARY LINES
1. ***The Girdle of Venus:*** *The passions.*
2. ***The Cross Line:*** *Power to govern.*
3. ***The Lines of Union:*** *Marriage, children, divorce.*
4. ***The Martian Lines:*** *Military glory, personal triumph.*
5. ***The Travel Lines:*** *Journeys, discoveries.*
6. ***The Mercury or Health Line:*** *Bodily, mental and spiritual well-being.*
7. ***The Three Bracelets of Health, Wealth and Happiness***

Because a person's inherited character and disposition are reflected in the shape of his hands and fingers, the texture of the skin and the shape of the finger-nails, chirognomy, the study of hand formation, is an essential part of palmistry.

Large, straight and well-shaped hand: *Expansive personality, lively and possibly aggressive.*
Long and slender hand: *Fastidious and gentle personality.*
Pudgy hand: *The 'priest's hand' – mystical and unctuous.*
Thin and dry hand: *Nervous, intellectual, ascetic, touchy, tenacious.*
Hard and firm hand: *Energetic, sporting, good memory, tending to violence.*
Damp hand: *Lazy, unstable but kindly.*
Hot hand: *Vivacious, bountiful, but lacking in depth and sincerity.*
Cold hand: *Taciturn, secretly generous.*

The size, formation and flexibility of the thumb, the shape of the individual fingers, and their length in relation to the palm of the hand, are all significant.

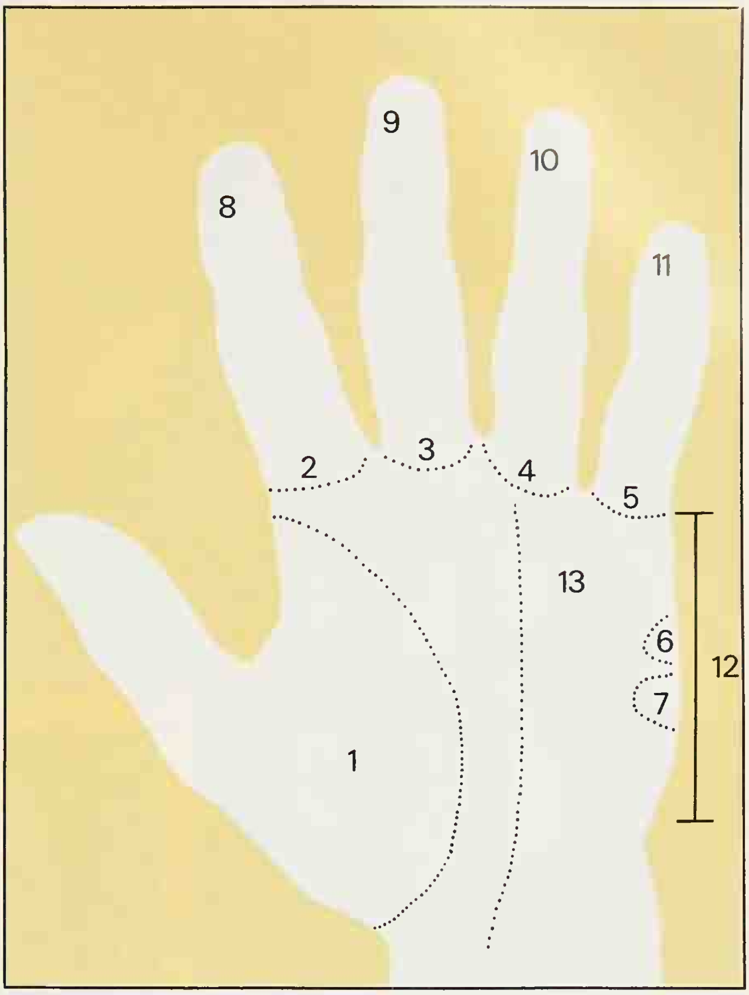
Large thumb: *Strong-minded, energetic, given to command, liking work, self-controlled.*
Thumb bent well in towards the palm: *Moderate, tending to be mean.*
Thumb bent outwards: *Open-natured and generous.*
Thumb bent out and backwards: *The 'killer's thumb', danger of brutality.*
Long fingers: *Polite, excitable, anxious, delicate, aesthetic.*
Short fingers: *Impatient, sensuous, creative, good-hearted.*
Pointed fingers: *Impatient, sensuous, creative, illogical.*

Finger-nails vary widely in shape and are said to reflect a number of different character traits. The care of the nails does not affect their basic type in any way; whether they are carefully manicured or broken by work, their significance remains the same.

Long: *Gentle and kind, discreet, keeper of secrets.*
Almond-shaped: *Idealistic, tactful, serene and courteous.*
Long and thin: *Visionary, irritable, delicate in health.*
Rectangular: *Practical, sensible.*
Long and large: *Timid.*
Short: *Critical, scientific.*
Very short: *Lacking self-control, fanatical.*
Short and large: *Morbid, sad.*
Short and straight: *Rigid, jealous.*
Short and rounded: *Envious, covetous.*

THE REGIONS OF THE HAND

. **The Mount of Venus:** *Love, instincts, vitality, sensuality, fecundity, bounty.*
2. **The Mount of Jupiter:** *Religion, philosophy, ambition, leadership.*
. **The Mount of Saturn:** *Stolidity, resignation, scepticism.*
. **The Mount of Apollo:** *Artistry, exhibitionism, success, fantasy.*
. **The Mount of Mercury:** *Finance, travel, inheritances, mental agility.*
. **The Mount of Mars:** *Aggression, courage, fidelity, physical strength.*
. **The Mount of Luna:** *Imagination, instability, clairvoyance.*
. **The Finger of Jupiter:** *Domination, leadership.*
. **The Finger of Saturn:** *Stability, conservatism, jealousy.*
0. **The Finger of Apollo:** *Artistic genius, musical, theatrical, cheerfulness.*
1. **The Finger of Mercury:** *Egotism, avarice, dissimulation, astuteness.*
2. **Range of Percussion:** *Signs concerning marriage, children, divorce.*
3. **Quadrangle of Heart and Head:** *Equilibrium, harmony, peace.*

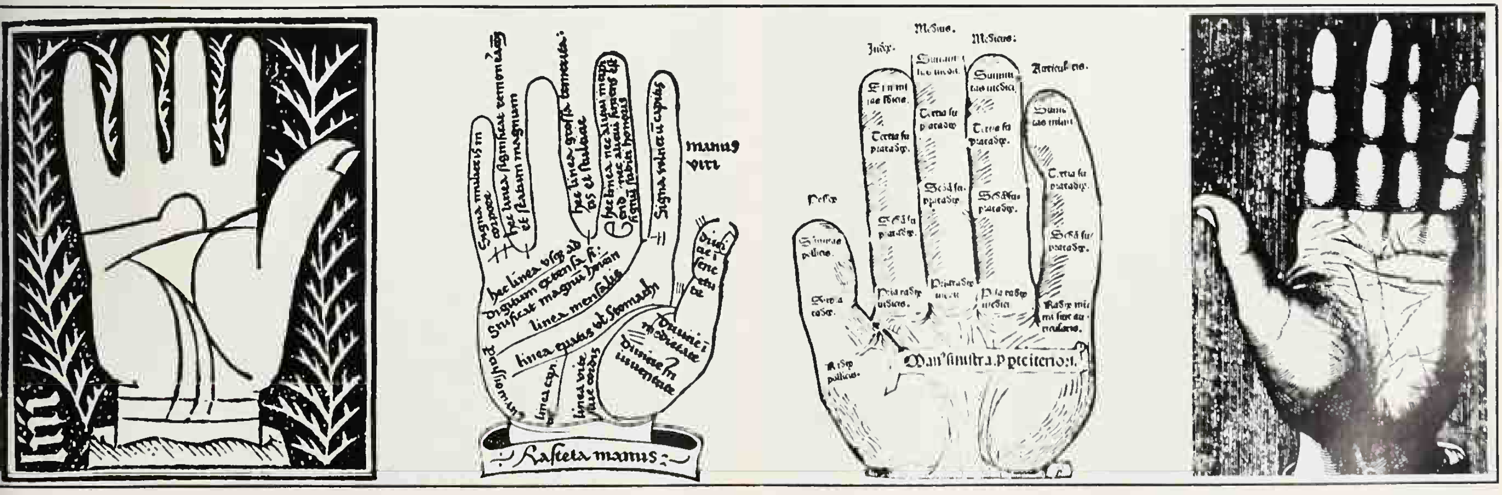


A doctor may be able to tell, from a atient's physique, the type of illness he is kely to suffer, and in the same way the almist claims that he can detect tendencies owards cancer, tuberculosis, asthma, heart rouble and so on, by studying the physical haracteristics of the hand. The validity of uch a claim is debatable, although much upporting evidence is offered by palmists vho specialize in diagnosis. They also claim o substantiate or complement the findings f modern psychologists, and certainly, if pecific physical characteristics indicate a roneness to specific physical illnesses, they nay well do the same where psychoneuroses re concerned.

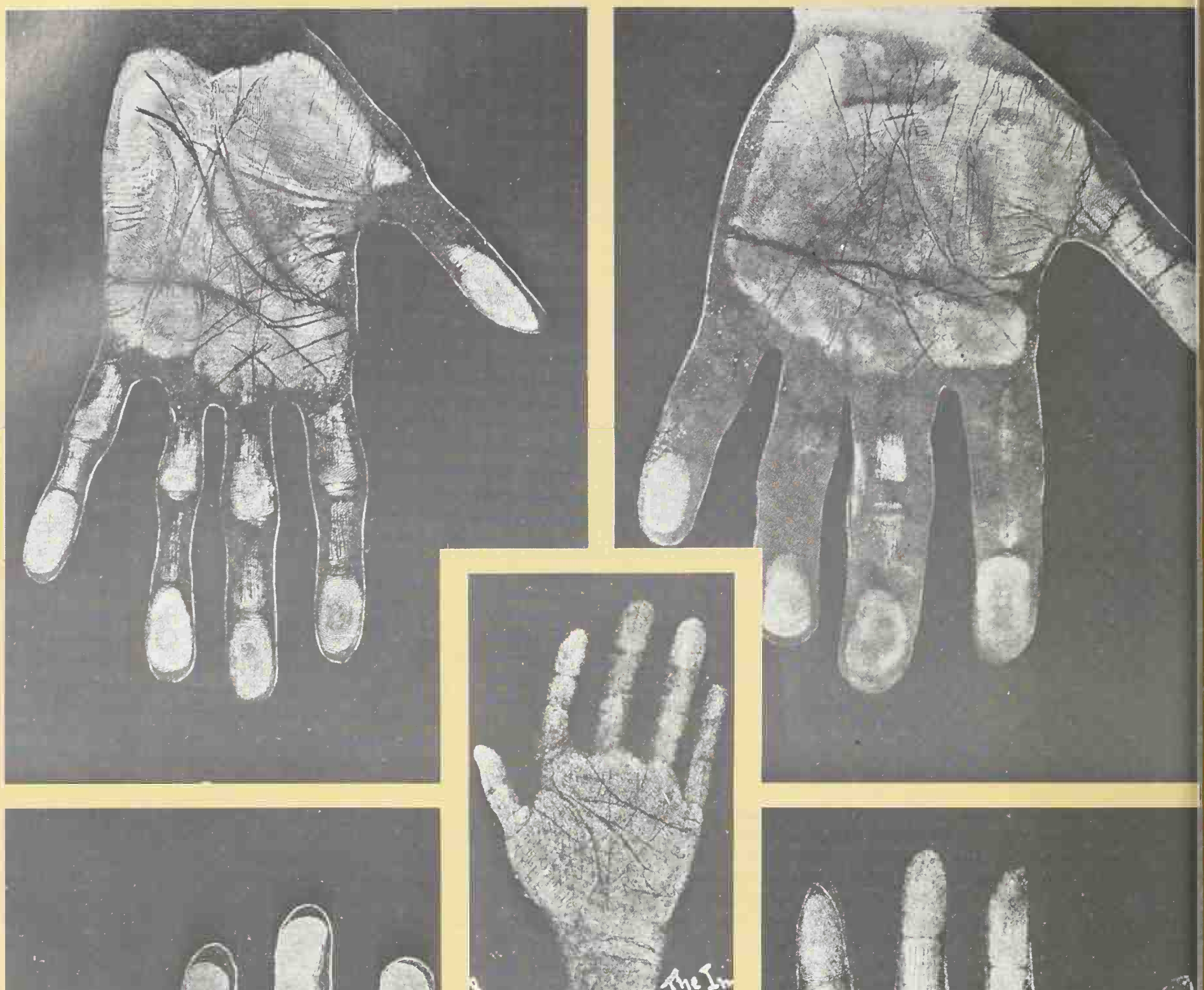
The occult theory that the physical body s extruded or solidified from an etheric pattern-body called the astral (see ASTRAL BODY) suggests that the hands express in their form and configurations the subtle mental and spiritual essence, or core, of an individual. The driving power of the unconscious may be said to determine the outer or bodily appearance, and the palmist sees this force making itself apparent in the hands, as the phrenologist sees it in the configurations of the skull.

A neurotic or nervous temperament is generally reflected in a small dry hand, either long and triangular in shape or with distorted contours. The palm will be very lined, as will the thin, pointed fingers, and the Heart Line will be fragmented. A person with this temperament will tend to change occupations frequently, and to be emotionally clinging, but capricious in love relationships. He or she is likely to encounter tragedy of some kind, and to terminate marriage by divorce.

A person with a bilious temperament generally possesses a rectangular or square hand that is thin, firm, muscular and warm, with yellowish skin. The lines are clearly marked and brown in tint, the fingers are long and spatulate and the thumb big. The Head Line will be straight. The individual concerned will have a tendency to gastric



The overall shape of the hands is believed to indicate the basic disposition of the person concerned ***Below, left to right*** **An intuitive hand; an intellectual hand; a practical hand; a sensitive hand**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troubles. Intelligent and enterprising, he will probably be successful although he is likely to encounter setbacks. Audacious, he will be impetuous or crude in love relationships. He will dislike discipline, and is likely to marry for money rather than love.

A hand that is large and short, 'sticky', red and hairy with a firm Mount of Venus, indicates a sanguine temperament. The thumb will be short and the hand will show not very numerous deep red lines. A person with this type of hand will be impulsive, unreflecting and active in many ways, but will tend to be superficial in all undertakings. Optimistic and happy-go-lucky, he will enjoy life. Although someone of this disposition may frequently lose his temper with his marriage partner and children, he is very forgiving. Vain and easily taken in by flatterers, he enjoys public acclaim. He may suffer from circulatory and cardiac illnesses.

An individual with a lymphatic temperament will have long, soft white hands with short fingers, the joints of which are somewhat dislocated, and large nails. There will be few lines, but those that there are will be well-marked, if pale. There may be red spots on the back of the hand. Cold, calm, patient and persevering, this kind of person has a gift for organization and will make steady progress in life. He will face difficulty and danger calmly, although he dislikes fighting and quarrels, preferring the good things of life. Dogmatic so far as religion is concerned, he rarely seeks divorce.

The hands of a young person will reveal the direction his life is likely to take, and will also indicate future choices and difficulties. Generally the left hand is thought to indicate an individual's hereditary disposition, while the right hand is said to show what choices will be made, and what defeats and successes lie ahead, although some palmists do not admit this division of information between the two hands.

By studying his hands, a young person may be guided to choose a suitable profession. As a result of learning about his character traits, his predilections, propensities and strong and weak points, he is able to orientate himself in a positive way towards family, partners and society; such knowledge gained from the hands is invaluable. Understanding the nature and force of his passions can help him in choosing a wife, and foreknowledge of financial success or poverty enables him to face the future thankfully or bravely as the case may be.

Facing page Diagrams from Cheiro's *Language of the Hand* showing (*top left*) the hand of a suicide: the steeply sloping head line is said to indicate a person who might kill himself on impulse *Top right* The palm of a convicted murderer has a head line that 'takes possession' of the heart line, masking all generous impulses or kind thoughts *Below left* People with 'psychic' hands are said to be visionary and idealistic: impression of Annie Besant's hand *Below right* Sarah Bernhardt's hand: the star on the mount of the sun, connected with the line of the sun, denotes fame and celebrity *Centre* Lines are deeply marked at birth: impression of a baby's hand, taken 24 hours after he was born

For the mature man or woman the past can be reviewed by means of the hands, and errors investigated, understood and forgiven. The present can be illuminated, and if it is found to be unsatisfactory changes may be indicated that will lay the foundations for a more promising future. The opportunity to profit by past mistakes, and to perfect the character, is always there.

In old age, studying the hands can recall past memories; thanks can be offered for dangers past, hurdles overcome and successes gained. The hand should reveal depths, serenity and an ever-expanding vision of the wholeness of life, of that which is the Eternal.

Significant Handshake

A palmist will start interpreting the characteristics of a client's hand almost from the moment that they first meet. To start with, he notices what kind of hand he, or more usually she, possesses, and what kind of handshake they exchange. Is the hand firm and friendly, or is it weak or flabby? The first key to the client's personality is there, indicating that she is strong or weak, nervous or assured, pampered or hardworking.

Having made these observations, the palmist holds the client's hands in his, and studies their shape. If they are long, a gift for detail and deliberation is indicated, while if they are small she is likely to be intuitive and impetuous. If the client constantly withdraws her hands and gesticulates gracefully, it means that she will be successful at social gatherings; but if her gestures are violent she is likely to be aggressive and highly strung.

A woman who clenches her hands is a restless, frustrated but self-reliant and dynamic person. If she has a way of extending her little finger elegantly, this is a sign that she is moody. If she flutters her hands she is most probably feather-brained and anxious; if she twists and wrings them she is quick to make decisions, but always nervous. If her hands remain relaxed she is a confident and practical person with many interests, but she may be a little childlike or over-trusting.

The woman who unconsciously tries to conceal her hands, or the man who plunges his deep into his pockets, both have secrets to conceal; they may be extremely shrewd about money matters and are likely to change their views on life frequently.

Sign of Strength

The way the client holds her fingers is another key to her character. Close together suggests a leader or a career woman, while someone who holds them slightly apart is primarily a good friend, and has a trusting nature. Unconventional or extravagant people spread their fingers wide, while those whose hands are held in a claw-like position are avaricious and untrustworthy.

The basic character is revealed in the left hand, on which the inherited pattern is shown. (Although palmists have debated whether the order of inspection should be reversed if the client is left-handed, no final decision has been reached.) A series of small lines and chains on the Life Line tells of physical weakness, but may also indicate a varied, nomadic or unstable background. A double line gives added strength to the one that is duplicated. Triple lines are rare, but when they occur they can indicate genius, passion, fame and riches; but if the surrounding lines or marks show counter-indications, deceitfulness or obsessional sexuality is likely. A meandering line suggests that the client lacks a clear goal in life, or that she may be the victim of troublesome minor illnesses or worries.

The way in which the Life Line terminates is significant. A forked terminal may mean feebleness in old age, which is to be expected, but it may also indicate lack of security because of improvidence in earlier years. If it ends with many tiny lines, financial loss or some tragedy may be forecast.

However, the depressing future foretold by these indications may be mitigated if the client deliberately strengthens herself both physically and mentally. Her success in doing this will be reflected in the ever-changing configurations on her right hand. Regular inspection will show that, once practical steps have been taken towards improvement, harmful lines and marks, or distorted mounts, will disappear completely or be modified.

Once the palmist has interpreted the innate qualities and tendencies shown in his client's left hand, he will read the right one, making comparisons with the other from time to time. He will see whether the right hand shows modifications for better or worse, and give advice as to what kind of action his client should take.

The Seal of God

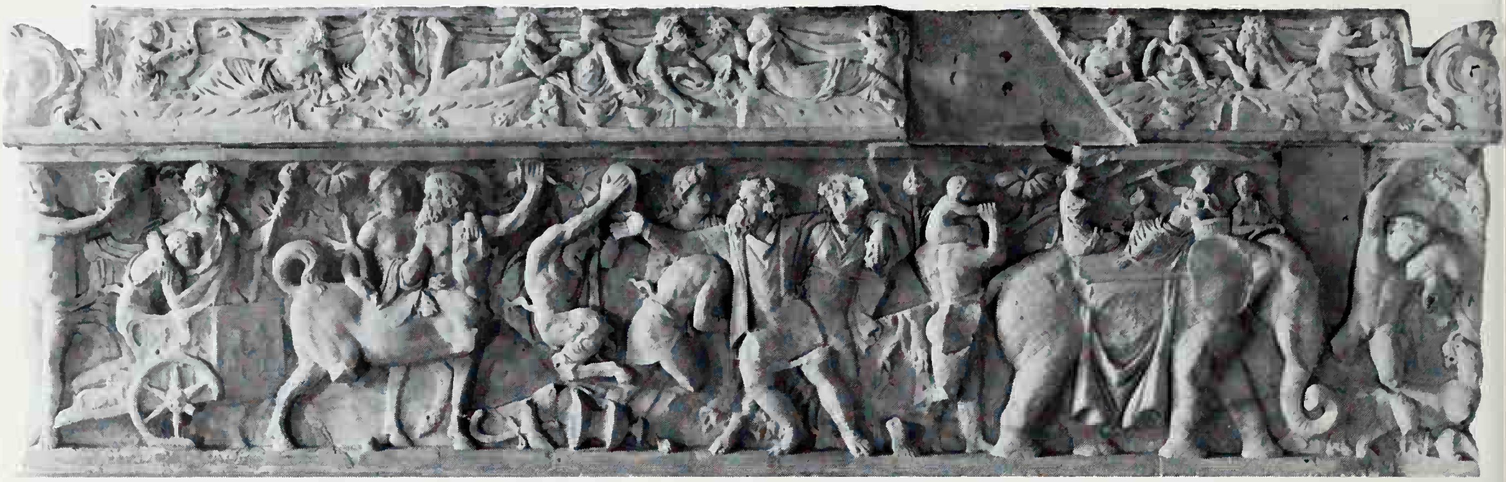
Plain hands showing scarcely any marks are rare, but do occur occasionally. What can be a strange and alarming blankness to the person concerned does not indicate death, life in a mental hospital, or an isolated existence. Nor does it mean that she is without significance. I have in fact seen a hand like this, and know that the owner led a long and fruitful life although she was physically handicapped from birth.

It is said that God 'seals up the hand of every man, that all men may know his work' (Job 37.7) and of wisdom that 'Long life is in her right hand; and in her left hand are riches and honour' (Proverbs 3.16). The third angel of the Apocalypse cried: '...if anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand...' (Revelation 14.9).

The prophets ascribed the signs on hands to the imprint of God, placed there so that men could learn to understand themselves and recognize their destiny as God's instruments for establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth. This could mean that the powers of destruction will not prevail. God has set his seal upon men's hands, and because they have been marked or destined by him good must triumph in the end.

BASIL IVAN RAKOCZI

FURTHER READING: The classic work on palmistry is *Cheiro's Language of the Hand* (Arco Books, 1968 reprint). See also M. Anderson, *Palmistry* (Weiser, 1980).



The goat-footed deity of the Arcadians, Pan was said to wander through woodland glades accompanied by dancing nymphs; a shepherd god, he was also credited with the ability to cause sudden terror among both herds and men

PAN

PERHAPS the most appealing introduction to the worship of Pan, the strange deity of the Greek countryside, is the Homeric Hymn to the god. It is imbued with an idyllic charm, a joyful salute to the folklore god of flocks and herds, whose old home was in remote Peloponnesian Arcadia, surrounded by mountains.

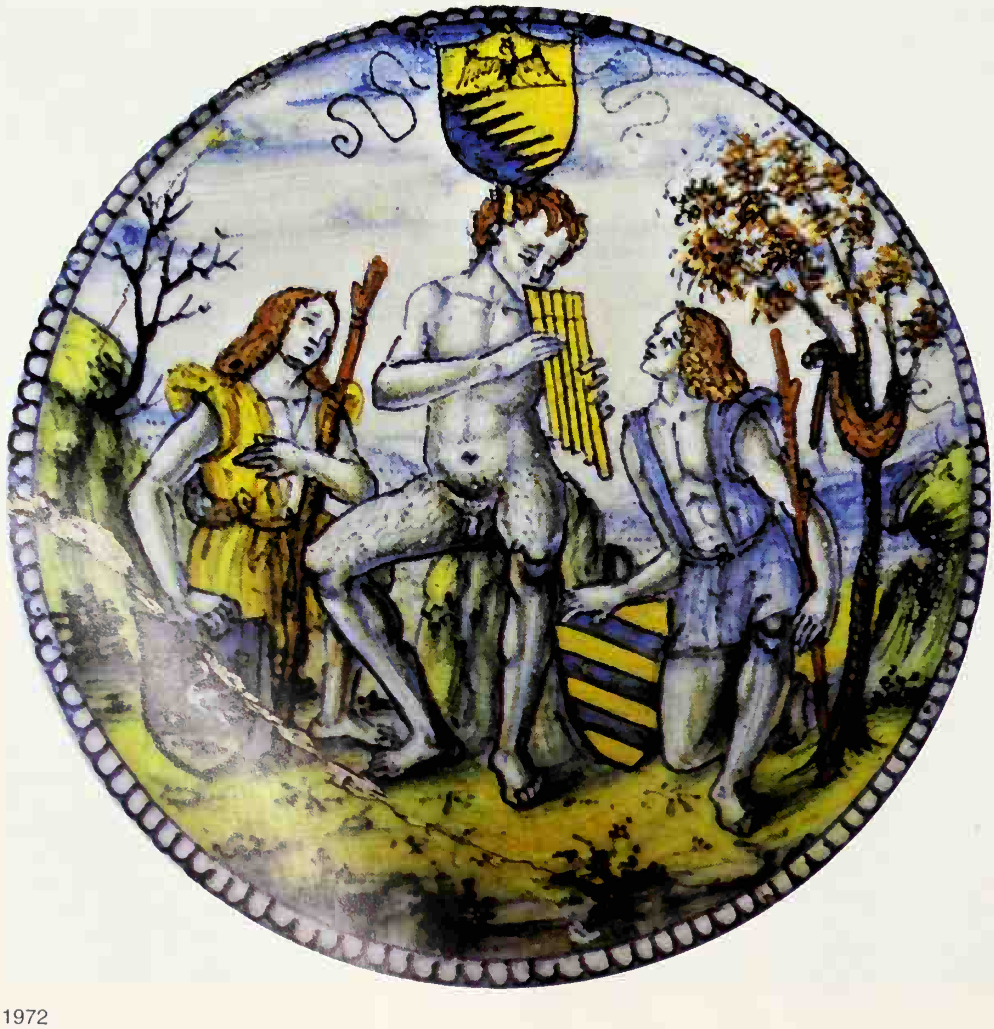
The poet begins by appealing to the Muse to tell him about Pan, son of Hermes, with his goat's feet and his two horns, a lover of noise. This strikes a traditional note at once for, although genealogies vary, Hermes and Pan were both shepherd gods of Arcadia. The god, continues the poem, wanders through the woodland glades with dancing nymphs who tread the sheer hill crests, invoking Pan, the long-haired and shaggy deity whose haunts are the snowy ridges, mountain peaks and rocky ways. He goes through dense thickets, now drawn to gentle streams, now climbing up to the topmost peak from which the flocks can be watched. Often too he darts across the mountain slopes as a keen-eyed hunter.

The Arcadians themselves were famous as hunters and it was natural for their goat-footed god to represent an occupation that was so familiar to his worshippers. It was also natural for them to describe the herdsman god as playing his pipes in the evening when the sport was over, vying with bird songs. At times the clear-toned mountain nymphs are with the god, moving nimbly, and singing their songs, that echo around the mountain top, by a spring of dark water, while Pan joins in the dancing. He wears a lynx-pelt on his back as he delights in the songs in a soft meadow, where the crocus and the fragrant hyacinth are mingled with the grass.

This passage is reminiscent of a choral ode from the *Helen* of Euripides (translated by Richmond Lattimore):

> I was down by the shining blue
> water, and on the curl of the grass
> there in the golden glare of the sun
> laid out the coloured wash
> in the bed of the young rushes
> to dry. There I heard my lady
> and the pitiful sound as she cried out,
> the voice of sorrow, lament without lyres,
> a sharp voice of pain, of mourning
> as cries aloud for grief some nymph,
> a naiad, caught
> in the hills for all her flight, gives voice
> to pain, as under the rock hollows
> she cries out
> on Pan and his captured marriage.

The next part of the Homeric Hymn goes on to describe how the nymphs sing of the birth of Pan, of how Hermes, the swift messenger of all the gods, came to Arcadia, land of many springs and mother of flocks, to the land where his sacred place is as god of Cyllene. There he fell in love with Dryope, the daughter of Dryops, son of Arcas. Dryope bore him a son, a son who was a marvel to look upon from the time of his birth, with his goat's feet and his two horns and his noisy, merry laughter. But when the nursing



C. M. Dixon/British Museum

Originally the god of shepherds and hunters in Arcadia, Pan haunted woodland glades and thickets, and was the lover of nymphs: according to the Homeric Hymn in his honour, he was dear to Dionysus, the god of orgiastic release *Above* Roman relief showing the return of Dionysus from the East; Pan is near the centre: Pashley sarcophagus, 2nd century AD *Left* Shepherds listen to Pan playing his pipes: 16th century dish from Siena

mother looked upon his uncouth, bearded face she sprang up and fled in fear, abandoning her child.

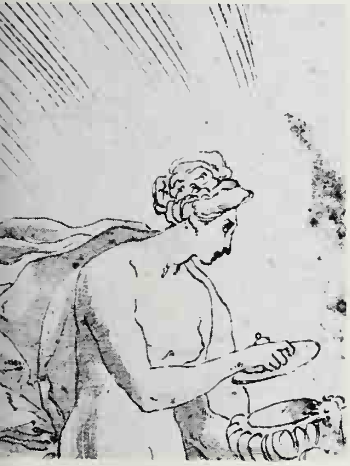
Then Hermes took his son in his arms and there was boundless joy in his heart. Carrying him closely wrapped up in the skins of mountain hares, he went swiftly to the abodes of the immortal gods. (The hare, by the way, is a symbol of Pan on some ancient coins.) He set the child down beside Zeus and showed him to the other gods. They were delighted, Dionysus especially; and because the child gave them all such pleasure, they called him Pan which, according to the Homeric Hymn, is derived from the Greek word for 'all', *pas*. This derivation is also given by Plato; and it has further been suggested that the Orphic identification of Pan with the cosmos, 'the all', must have been caused by this particular piece of etymology.

'Panic' Terror

Pan had no part in the old traditional Olympian pantheon, and in the 5th century BC Herodotus spoke of him as one of the more recent Hellenic deities. No doubt he had been revered in the fastnesses of his native Arcadia long before his name and cult spread to other parts of Greece.

Pan was certainly a late arrival in Athens, where he was worshipped in a cave under the Acropolis, perhaps because he was supposed to have helped the Athenians at Marathon by casting 'panic' terror into the Persian ranks. Certainly Pan could cause sudden panic among herds, when the animals, seized inexplicably by fright, would rush away; and panic among armies was also thought to be clearly the work of Pan, as the name bears witness.

Herodotus tells how the fast runner, Pheidippides, was sent off to Sparta before the battle of Marathon. On the way he was accosted by Pan, who addressed him by name and bade him ask the Athenians why they neglected him when he was so kindly disposed towards them, had often helped them in the past and would do so again in the future. As soon as they could turn their minds to such matters the Athenians therefore set up a shrine to Pan under the Acropolis and established in his honour yearly sacrifices and a torch race.



Giraudon

Pandora

In Greek mythology, the first woman, created by Zeus to punish men after Prometheus had brought them the gift of fire; she opened the great jar or box in which all evils had been confined, so letting them loose to plague the world; her name, which means 'All-giving', suggests that she was originally an earth goddess. See PROMETHEUS; WOMAN.

Pantheism

From Greek *pan*, 'all', and *theos*, 'god', the belief that all is God and God is All, the sum total of everything that exists; it implies that the apparent diversity of the universe conceals a unity, which is God, the Absolute, or the One; it also implies that evil, suffering, change, limit, are as much parts or aspects of God or the One as good, immutability, infinity, eternity.

A French doctor with a passion for occultism, 'Papus' was the influential author of a number of books on the Cabala, the Tarot and astrology

PAPUS

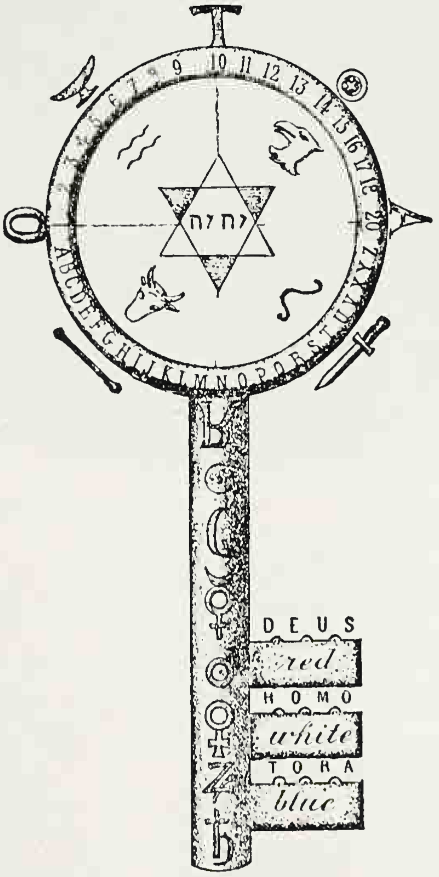
DR GÉRARD ENCAUSSE, better known as 'Papus', was the virtual creator of the widespread popular interest in occultism that emerged in France during the late 1880s. It is noteworthy that this coincided with the period, roughly between 1884 and 1891, when Mme Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society were attracting a large and enthusiastic following in Britain (see BLAVATSKY; THEOSOPHY). The Theosophical movement had its devoted supporters in France, but never on the same scale as in English-speaking territories. The Society was organized on an international scale, while the new occultist movement in France was specifically French.

In the past the French, like the British and to a lesser extent the Germans, had interested themselves in mesmerism, phrenology and above all Spiritualism. Papus and his followers gave occultism a broader dimension by providing a literature that dealt with such subjects as the Cabala, the Tarot and astrology.

Encausse, who wrote under the pseudonym Papus – his actual identity was never a secret – was a prolific author, a tireless lecturer, and a publicist and popularizer rather than a mystic in the traditional sense. He was not a 'commercial' occultist, although his books may have produced a fair income. He was a successful physician, although his preoccupation with occultism, which almost amounted to a mania, may have been to his financial detriment.

Gérard Encausse was born in Spain in 1865 of a Spanish mother and a French father, a chemist. The family returned to Paris in 1869 and the boy was educated there. He started his medical studies in 1882 but long before he qualified was spending much of his time at the Bibliothèque Nationale where he studied magical and alchemical literature.

He was an early member of the French section of the Theosophical Society, which was founded when Mme Blavatsky visited Paris in 1884–5, but he soon resigned because he disliked the emphasis on Eastern occult teachings. Very few of the new generation of French occultists who appeared on the scene a decade after the death of Eliphas Levi (see LEVI) in 1875 ever did more than flirt with Theosophy. These young men, led by Encausse and his friend Stanislas de Guaita (1861–97) were above all students of the Cabala and posthumous disciples of Levi. Because Levi claimed to have discovered a cabalistic correspondence between the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the 22 Major Trumps in the Tarot pack, the supposed esoteric significance of the Tarot fascinated them (see PATHS; TAROT).



Frontispiece to Papus's *The Tarot of the Bohemians*: published in 1889, this book influenced many subsequent writers on the Tarot

The year 1888 is not without its importance in modern occultism. As 'Papus', Encausse published the first edition of his *Traité élémentaire de science occulte*, a work of popularization which had an enormous success in France and was subsequently translated into English, German, Spanish, Russian and Czech. In October 1888 he founded the monthly journal *L'Initiation* in collaboration with Stanislas de Guaita and well-known literary figures such as Joséphin Péladan, Catulle Mendès and Villiers de l'Isle Adam. All this coincided with the establishment in the same year of de Guaita's Cabalistic Rosicrucian Order with a Supreme Council of Twelve.

Oswald Wirth, later a well-known writer on esoteric Freemasonry and the Tarot, recalled that 'having nothing to govern, the Supreme Council remained in a state of expectant inertia'. Papus founded the Independent Group for Esoteric Studies, which soon attracted a membership of several hundreds, and became the main source of recruitment for de Guaita's Order.

Whatever Papus and his contemporaries knew about the Tarot was derived from stray hints in Eliphas Levi's books. However, Levi had never published a Tarot manual, and Papus filled the gap in 1889 with his famous *Le Tarot des Bohémiens*, which was to influence dozens of subsequent writers on the subject. His monumental *Traité méthodique de science occulte* (1891) contains an excellent review of contemporary ideas about occultism in France.

In about 1891 he took over the direction of the Martinist Order, which had been founded in 1887 by Henri Delaage, an obscure occultist. Its title refers to Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803), the 'Unknown Philosopher', who is still revered as an esoteric teacher by French occultists (see MARTINISTS).

Gave Away Masonic Secrets

The Order, which rapidly recruited a very large membership under Encausse's energetic leadership, became pseudo-Masonic. His efforts to establish an official connection with regular French Freemasonry were frustrated. He then contrived a link with the spurious Masonic Order of Memphis and Misraim and converted his Martinist Lodges into unofficial bodies for the indiscriminate communication of Masonic secrets to members of both sexes, and for the study of Masonic rituals, symbolism and history.

By about 1912 the Order had close ties with Theodor Reuss's Ordo Templi Orientis (Order of the Temple of the Orient). Aleister Crowley (see CROWLEY) was head of the British section.

Encausse took longer than usual to qualify as a doctor because of his many other interests. However, when he finally presented his thesis for the degree of doctor of medicine in the University of Paris in 1894 the examining professor said to him: 'Monsieur Encausse, you are no ordinary student. You have written books, under your own name or under a pseudonym, which have made you famous.'

Encausse was a successful, although by orthodox standards, unconventional physician. There are well-attested stories about his uncanny diagnostic powers, which appear to have owed more to clairvoyance than to normal medical knowledge. It was typical of him that he should have been a loyal friend and supporter of the famous Nizier Philippe, the Lyons 'healer' and miracle-worker. The latter undoubtedly possessed extraordinary abilities but was nevertheless prosecuted upon a number of occasions for illegal medical practice.

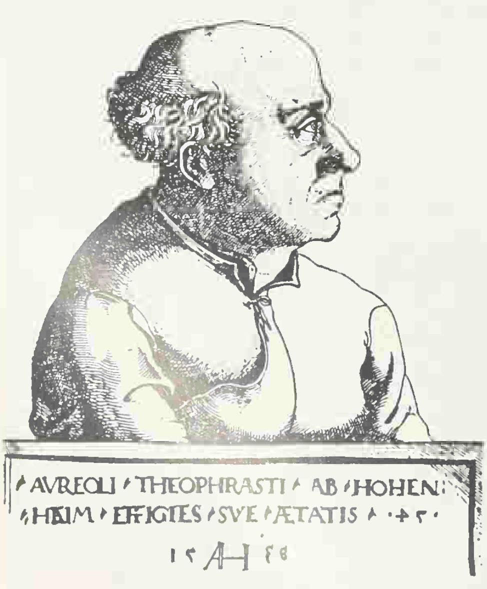
Encausse's fame, both as an occultist and a physician, reached Russia, which he visited three times between 1900 and 1906. He was on terms of intimate friendship with the Tsar and Tsarina, both of whom had a penchant for occultism. There were rumours that he had a malignant influence upon the Tsar and his wife but these do not appear to have any foundation.

Encausse served with distinction in the French army medical corps during the First World War and died at the age of 51, of a pulmonary infection, on 25 October 1916. During his comparatively short career, which spanned a period of only 30 years, he helped hundreds and thousands of Frenchmen to acquire at least a superficial knowledge of various aspects of occultism. In relation to the contemporary intellectual scene Encausse was essentially an 'underground' figure. Nevertheless, in relation to the social history of modern occultism, which has yet to be investigated by academic historians, he is of major importance.

ELLIC HOWE

The eternal outsider, detested by the orthodox physicians of his time, Paracelsus has since been recognized as the 'first modern medical scientist'; he was also a mystic whose writings and personality have fascinated generations of occultists

PARACELSUS



Portrait of Paracelsus: his unorthodox views and his egotistical and tetchy personality infuriated the medical establishment of his time

PHYSICIAN AND PHILOSOPHER, and traditionally an initiate and magus, Paracelsus is one of the most controversial figures of the first half of the 16th century. Born at Einsiedeln, Switzerland, in 1493, his full name was Phillipus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim. The extent to which his enigmatic personality has intrigued medical and cultural historians is reflected by the vast literature about him that has been published during the past 40 years. However, there are two contrasting views of Paracelsus, those of scholars, and those of recent generations of occultists.

His father, Wilhelm Bombast von Hohenheim, studied medicine at Tübingen in Germany, and then moved from Einsiedeln, where he practised medicine, to Villach in Carinthia, Austria. It was there that Paracelsus spent his boyhood.

Nothing definite is known about Paracelsus's early medical training, but he may have received his doctorate at the famous medical school at Ferrara in northern Italy in about 1515. The young physician then began the extraordinary journey that lasted, almost without interruption, until his death at the age of 48. His early wanderings, which continued for about ten years, took him successively to Rome, Naples, Sicily, southern Spain and Portugal, Paris and London, which he is supposed to have visited briefly in 1519. He then travelled to Stockholm, Moscow and Greece. Paracelsus eventually arrived at Salzburg in 1524, was for a short time at Strasbourg, and then accepted an appointment as town physician and Professor of Medicine at Basle in 1526.

His connection with this city was fortuitous. There had been talk of his unusual skill as a physician, and he was summoned there to treat the famous scholar-printer Johannes Frobenius, whose right leg was gangrenous. The local doctors could only suggest amputation but Paracelsus was able to save the limb.

He arrived at Basle with a reputation for great medical ability, unorthodox views and a tetchy personality. He at once met with opposition from the local apothecaries, whose scientific knowledge was at best primitive, and from the town's medical establishment, whose members were as conservative as Paracelsus was unorthodox. The atmosphere was not improved when Paracelsus circulated a printed leaflet in which he announced that he would lecture for two hours daily – not, he advertised, on the basis of out-of-date authorities, but on that of his own experience.

Medicine from the Stars

He promised yet another innovation, namely lectures on surgery. Until then this had been the exclusive province of self-taught barber-surgeons who had no proper medical training. The fact that he lectured in German instead of Latin was yet another novelty that infuriated conservative opinion. Paracelsus was giving a new and revolutionary dimension to medical teaching and vested interests were united in their

Paracelsus regarded medicine as an art based on four foundations: a philosophical approach, medical astrology, alchemy, and the moral and personal purity of the physician. 16th century German medal

C M Dixon British Museum

dislike of both the man and his methods. To make matters worse he never hesitated to show his contempt for his opponents.

After only 11 months at Basle, he was obliged to leave in a hurry and went to Alsace. This was the beginning of the second stage of his strange career as an itinerant physician. Indeed, during the following 13 years until his death in 1541 he settled briefly in at least 62 different places in Germany and Austria.

He wrote incessantly, although few of his major works were published during his lifetime. Of the 24 publications printed between 1529 and 1541 no fewer than 16 were astrological 'prognostications'. However, he was not an astrological prophet in the usual sense, since he was concerned mainly with astrological medicine and the possible relationships between weather and climate and human illnesses.

A well-known passage from his *Paragranum*, written after he left Basle, illustrates his contempt for his fellow-practitioners and their archaic methods: 'Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagnana, and all the rest of you, after me and not I after you! You people from Paris, Montpellier, Swabia, Meissen,' and half a dozen other places, 'after me and not I after you! Even in the most distant corner there will not be one of you on whom the dogs will not piss. But I will be the king and mine the kingdom . . .'

Jolande Jacobi remarked with good reason in her *Paracelsus: Selected Writings* (1951) that he 'is today celebrated as the first modern medical scientist, as the precursor of microchemistry, antisepsis, modern wound surgery, homoeopathy, and a number of other ultra-modern achievements.'

Paracelsus was above all a physician; he had trained in many schools and his opinions were formed through experience in many countries. He regarded medicine as an art based on four important foundations: a philosophical approach, astronomy (meaning medical astrology), alchemy (as a servant of medicine rather than in the sense of the attempt to change base metals into gold) and the personal and moral purity of the physician himself. Furthermore, he believed that a man should study medicine and become a physician only if he felt a genuine vocation for the work and its demands.

Practical Mystic

Most important of all was his view that Nature heals and that the physician can only assist the course of Nature. Therefore he must know the correct ways of helping and be able to avoid the wrong ones.

Although there is an enormous amount of information in Paracelsus's books his style is often so involved and obscure as to be almost incomprehensible. This applies particularly to his non-medical works such as *De Occulta Philosophia* and *Archidoxis Magica*, hermetic writings to which, as Jolande Jacobi remarks, we have lost the key. There were two sides to Paracelsus's character: the practical physician who was a highly-trained observer, and the mystic who trod paths that are excessively difficult for most people to follow.

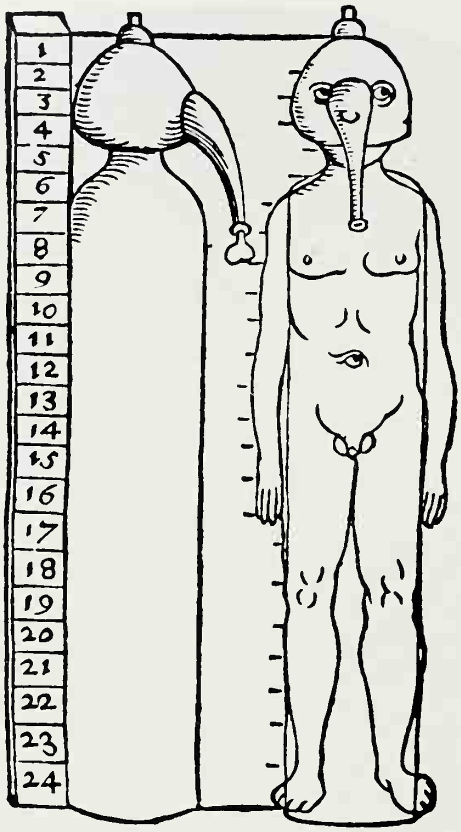
Paracelsus wrote the first comprehensive work on the causes, symptoms, diagnosis and therapy of syphilis. He proposed that epileptics should be considered as sick persons and not lunatics possessed by demons. He studied bronchial illnesses in mining districts and was one of the first people to recognize the connection between an industrial environment and certain types of disease. His range of interests was impressively wide. He concerned himself with such subjects as the curative effects of natural baths, pharmacy, the beneficial effects of plenty of light and fresh air in the sick room, and the necessity for physicians to learn surgical techniques and replace the unskilled barber-surgeons. Curiously enough he had little interest in anatomy; this involved the dissection of corpses while he himself was primarily concerned with living human beings.

During his lifetime Paracelsus was the eternal outsider, a stormy petrel who was detested or ignored by the conservative. Nevertheless, he must already have been to some extent a legendary personality when he died in poverty at Salzburg on 24 September 1541; nothing else would explain the fact that his manuscripts were still being printed long after his death, some as late as 1618.

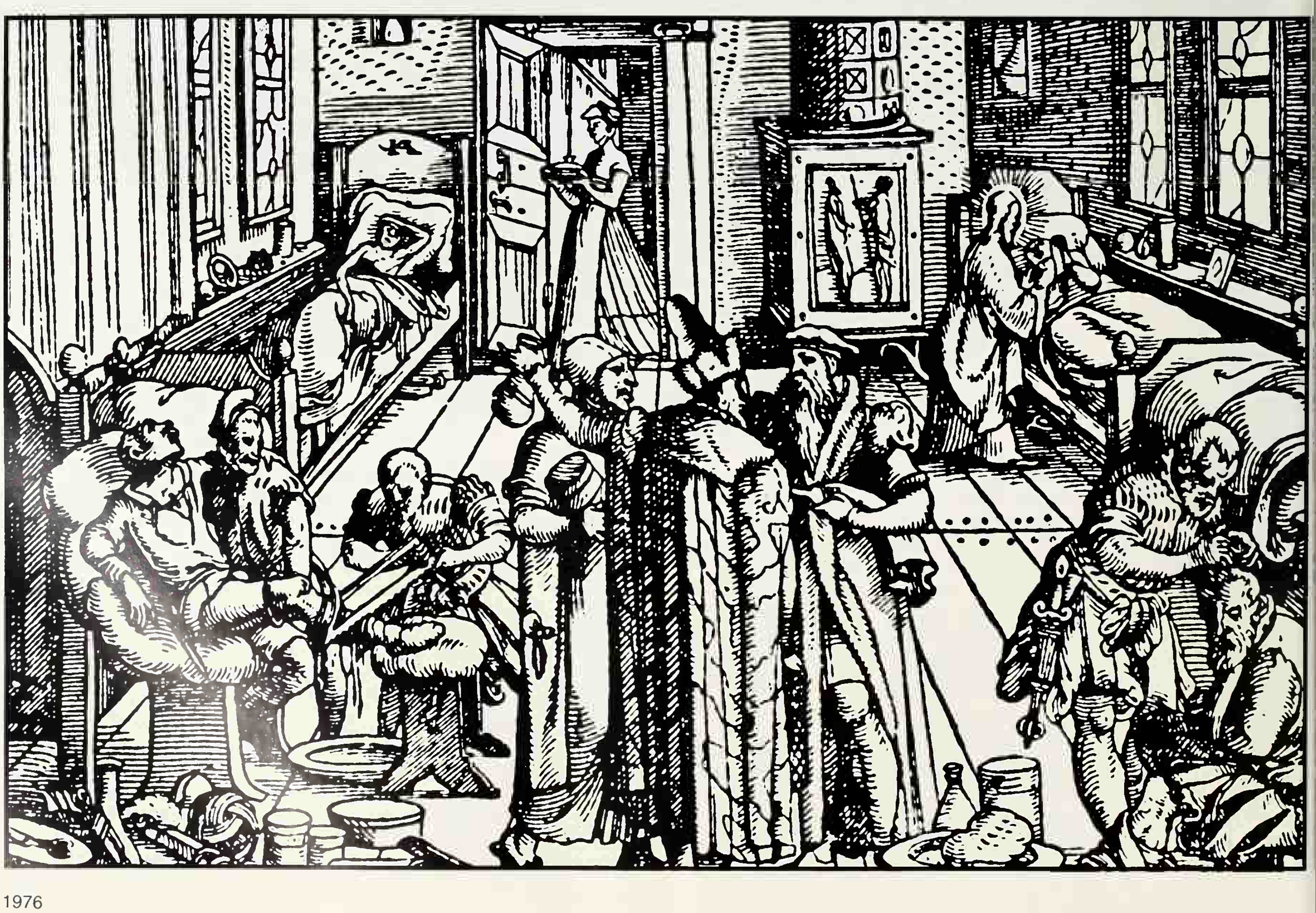
There is a recent tradition in occultist circles, and particularly in German-speaking countries, that there is still a place for 'Paracelsian' medicine. This takes the form of certain homoeopathic concoctions which probably owe little or nothing to Paracelsus.

ELLIC HOWE

FURTHER READING: Paracelsus, *Selected Writings* (Routledge, 1951).



Paracelsus has been described as 'the first modern medical scientist . . . the precursor of microchemistry, antisepsis, modern wound surgery, homoeopathy and a number of other ultra-modern achievements' *Above* The 'Anatomical Furnace' for the distillation of urine, from a treatise based on Paracelsus's principle of examining urine chemically to diagnose diseases *Below* Woodcut showing a hospital scene; Paracelsus is on the left of a group of surgeons



PARADISE

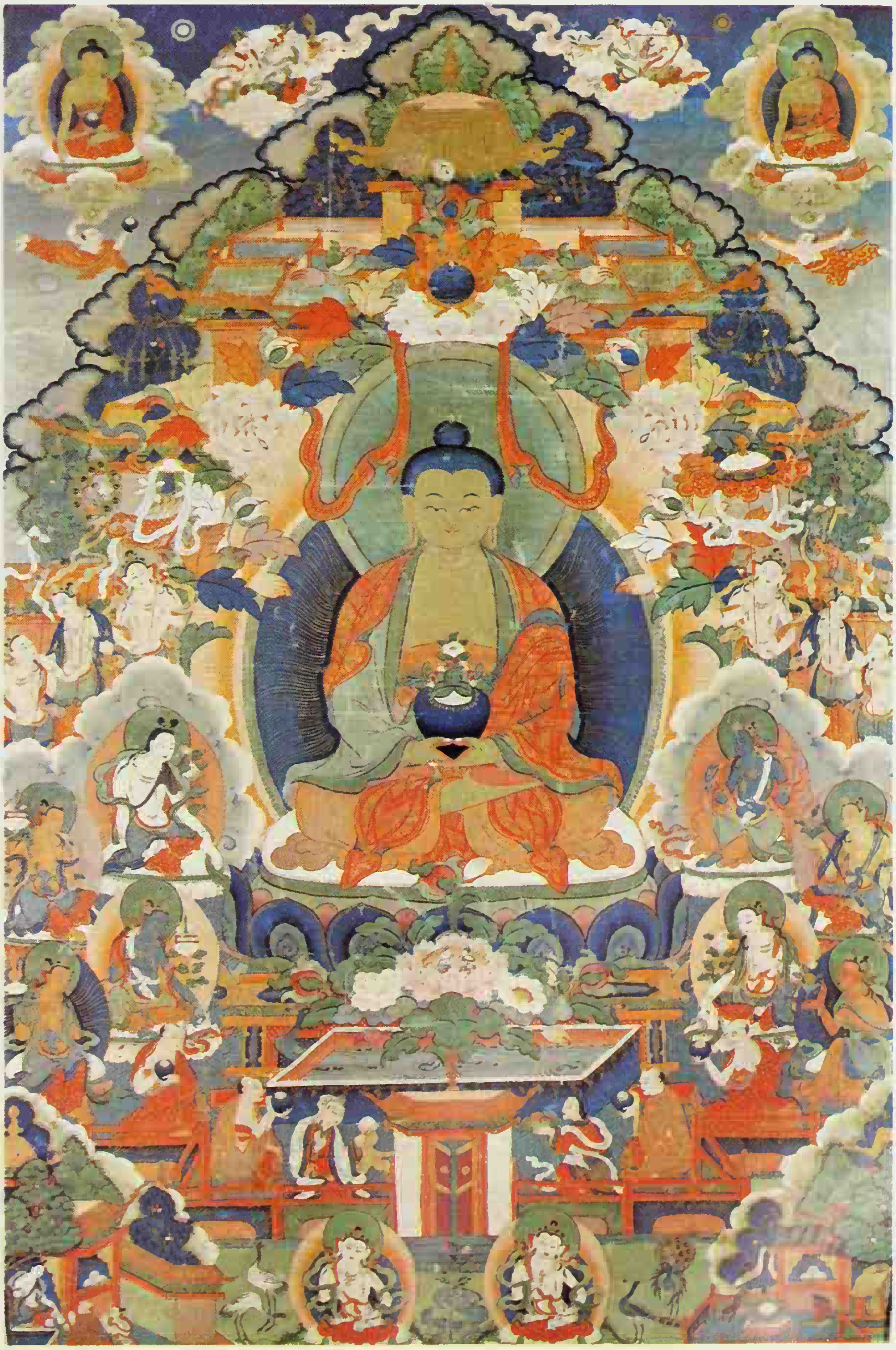
A good place, blessed and happy, heaven is the final beatitude, the ultimate goal

The Avalon of Arthurian legend, the Greek Elysian Fields and the Norse Valhalla are all concepts of paradise; in Christianity heaven is the eternal, blissful abode of all those among the dead whose lives have earned such reward . . .'

HAPPINESS was associated with enclosures rather than open spaces in the ancient Middle East, for deserts and hills, the wind and the sun, were generally too harsh to man. When he thought of a pleasant place, he thought of an oasis or garden, where he could relax in the shade with ample water and fruit. Given the resources, he might create such a place for himself.

The word 'paradise' is of Old Persian origin. It means an enclosure, and especially a royal park or hunting ground, a piece of land made more agreeable than its surroundings by cultivation. The Greek translators of the Old Testament, about the middle of the 3rd century BC, employed the word once or twice in that sense, for example in Ecclesiastes 2.5: 'I made myself gardens and parks, and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.' But their most momentous use of it was in referring to the garden of Eden, the divinely appointed home of Adam.

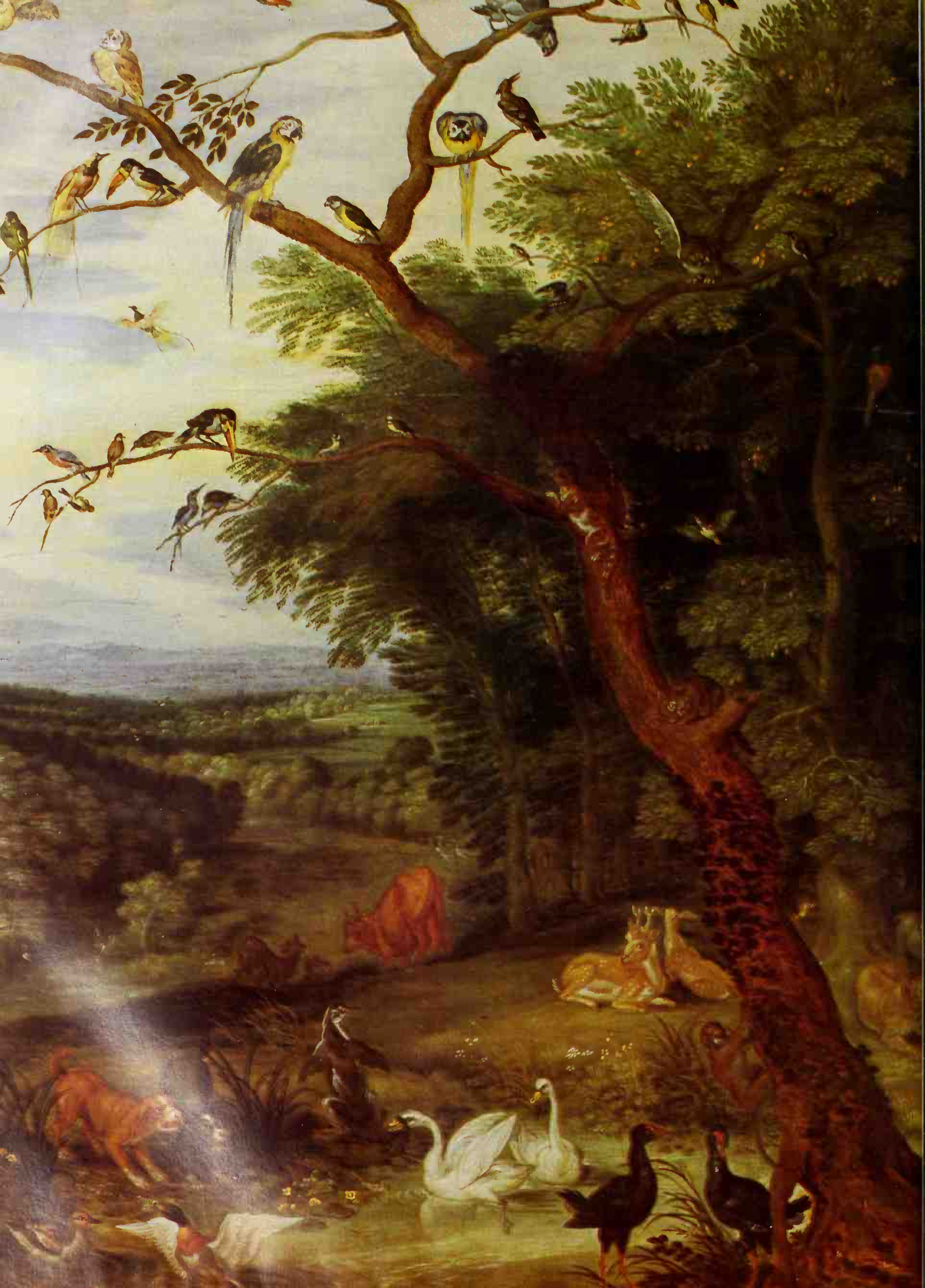
This appears in Genesis, chapter 2. After creating the world, God plants the garden 'in Eden, in the east'. He places Adam in it and creates the first woman, Eve. The name 'Eden' may be Babylonian. Among the luscious vegetation, God's garden contains the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. A river flows through it and splits up into four streams.

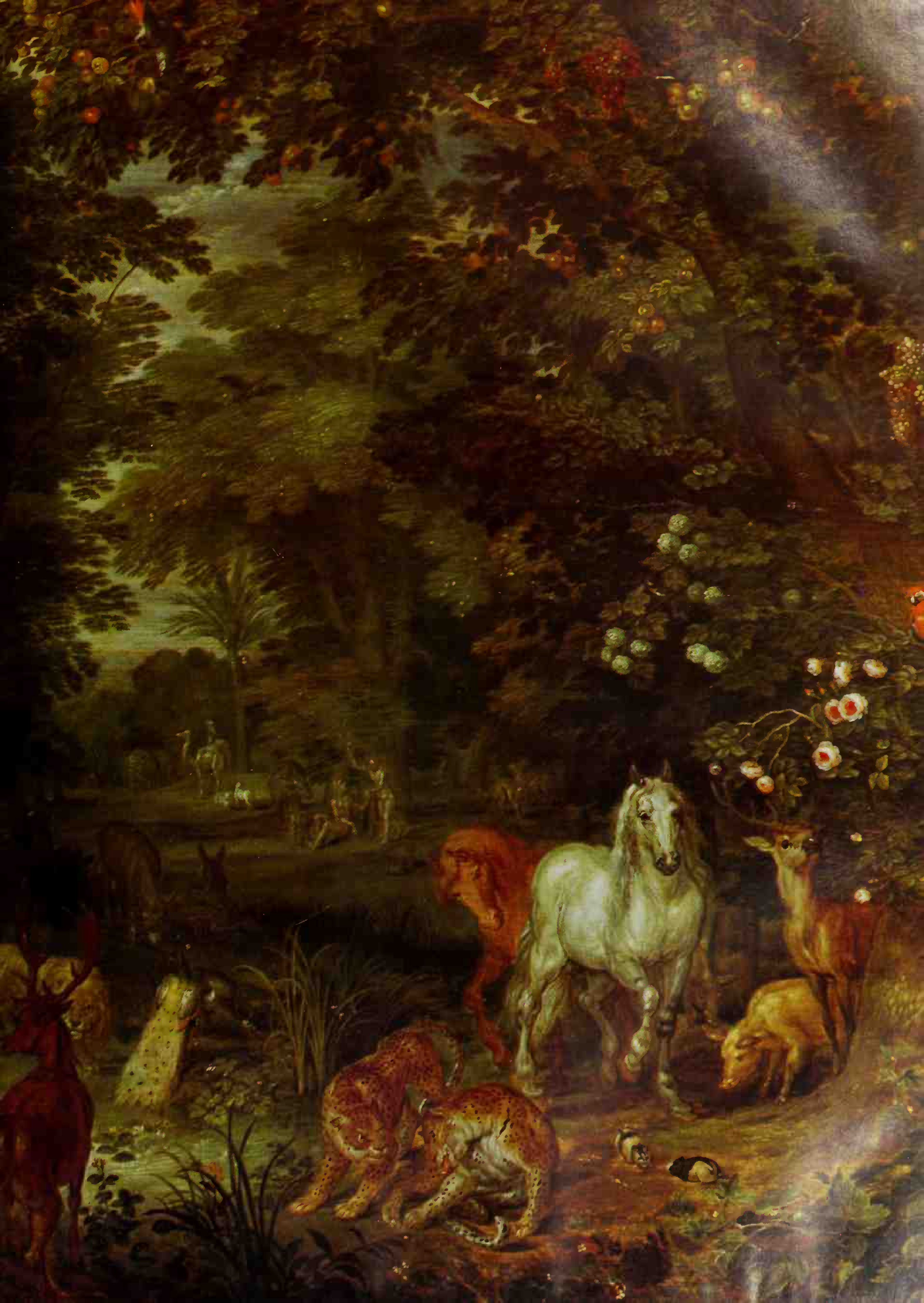


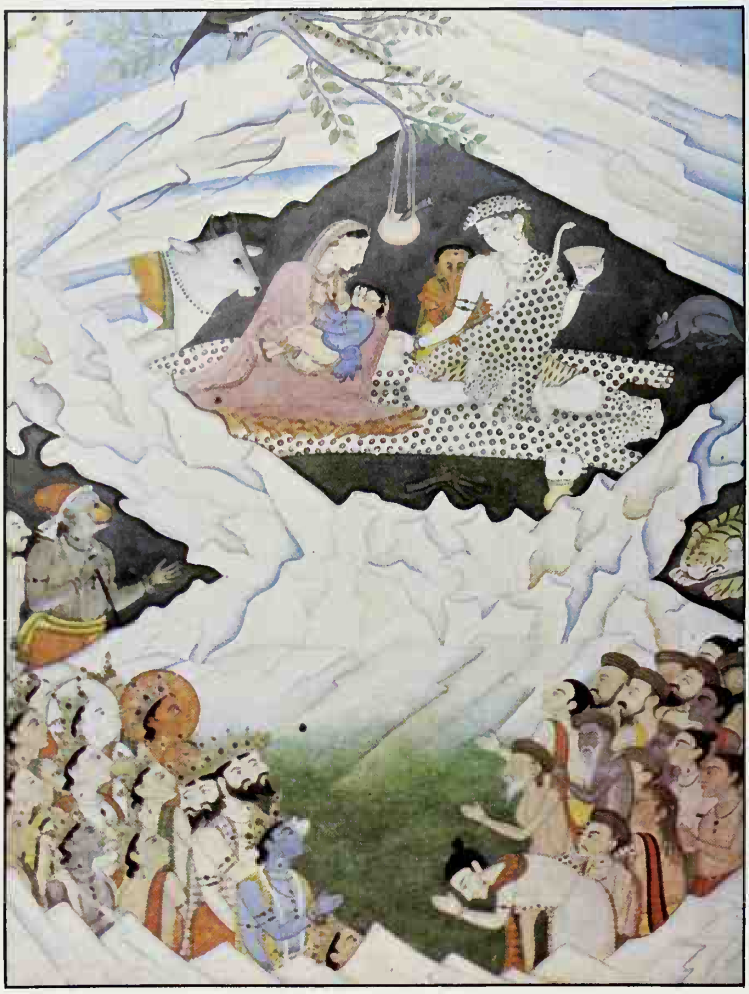
Right In its Mahayana form Buddhism has a graded series of paradises though, because man's ultimate achievement is release from the bondage of personality, existence in these heavens is not regarded as an ultimate goal: the exception, in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, is the 'Pure Land' or paradise established by the Buddha Amida, where existence is devoid of pain, sadness, hunger or anxiety. 18th century miniature

Following page The garden of Eden, the earthly paradise of Adam and Eve, is partly paralleled in non-Hebrew mythologies; the belief in some kind of definite 'otherwhere' or 'otherworld', and legends of a time when human beings were carefree and innocent both connect other paradises with this one: garden of Eden, by Jan Breughel; in the Victoria & Albert Museum

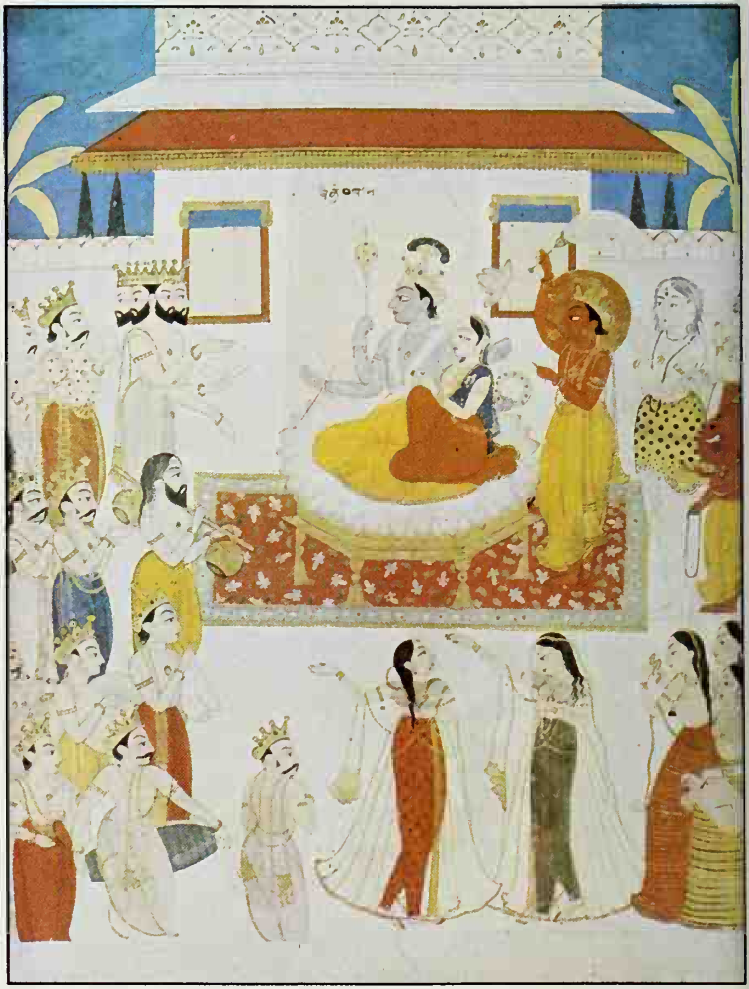
Michael Holford/Victoria & Albert Museum







Robert Skelton/Victoria & Albert Museum



Life in this earthly paradise is instinctively innocent, with the Lord as a close companion. It is no lazy idyll: Adam must till and keep the garden, with Eve's aid. God forbids them to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. When they disobey, they are expelled. The reason given (Genesis, chapter 3) is that if they stayed, they might eat the fruit of the Tree of Life also, and live for ever. This would have been permissible before; now it is not. Henceforth men must drudge to live. Women must be subject to male dominance and bear children in pain. Meanwhile the garden goes on existing but an armed angel at the gate keeps fallen humanity out.

While the Judaeo-Christian Fall of Man (see FIRST MAN) is in some ways unique, the garden has partial parallels in non-Hebrew mythologies. Two motifs, in particular, connect other 'paradises' with this one. First, Genesis gives the Hebrew version of a widespread idea – the idea of a definite place, an 'otherwhere' or even an 'otherworld', which is part of the universe we know, yet different in quality from the part we live in: a good place, blessed and happy.

Second, Genesis directs attention to the many legends of a lost Golden Age. Long ago, human beings were carefree and guiltless. They were immortal, or at any rate felt no reason to fear death. They lived without sickness in a kindly climate, and never had to work hard. Gods dwelt familiarly among them. For whatever reason, the Golden Age is no more. The gods have withdrawn. Death and disease and wickedness have poisoned life.

But in some mythologies the two themes converge; the paradisal good place not only exists, it is a fragment of the golden world that remains inviolate. If we could reach it we could still find there the delights and divine companionship of the Golden Age.

In classical myth, the Golden Age was the epoch when the Titan Cronus, or Saturn, was supreme god (see CRONUS; TIME). After his son Zeus ousted him, the world declined. But Cronus went on reigning in exile, in the regions of sunset. There, for the Greeks, was the 'good place', out over the Atlantic behind a barrier of water. There lay the Isles of the Blest where, in Hesiod's words, 'the bounteous earth beareth honey-sweet fruit fresh thrice a year'. There lay the plain of Elysium 'at the world's end' where, according to Homer, 'living is made easiest for mankind, no snow falls, no strong winds blow and there is never any rain'.

Celtic myth looked in the same direction. The Isle of Avalon (before its re-location at Glastonbury) was a warm western Elysium, sometimes described in language borrowed from classical literature. Irish seafaring romances, such as *The Voyage of Bran* tell of an enchanted archipelago beyond the horizon, including an Island of the Blest which is larger in extent than Erin itself, a place 'without grief, without sorrow, without death'.

Medieval Irish legend drew the pagan and Christian paradises together. The usual Christian belief was that the earthly paradise of Genesis was in a remote part of Asia. Some Irish Christians, however, located it in one of their own legendary lands beyond the Atlantic, and gave it a Celtic atmosphere. The greatest of all their voyage-romances tells how St Brendan sailed in quest of it, and finally arrived on its borders. The author of *St Brendan's Voyage* probably knew that the world is round, and he may have harmonized his fancies with orthodoxy by imagining that Brendan reached Asia by sailing west (see BRENDAN).

Paradise and Heaven

Adam's lost abode remains, humanly speaking, empty. Other paradises are variously peopled. The Golden Age dream of freedom from the curse of death is recurrent. The citizens of paradise are, as a rule, immortals. In the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, the hero, grief-stricken at human evanescence, goes to an island-otherworld expressly for the secret of immortality. He meets Utnapishtim, the chief survivor of the flood, who is indeed exempt from death. But Gilgamesh achieves nothing by his visit.

In more familiar mythologies, such places as Elysium are likely to be the homes of gods, demigods or fairy-folk, all undying. When human beings do enter, we hear (in the oldest stories) of only a chosen few transported there while alive, and endowed with immortality as a special gift. Homer names Menelaus, husband of Helen of Troy. A better known instance is King Arthur who is said to have gone to Avalon after his last battle, and to be still living there (see ARTHUR; GLASTONBURY).

Classical Greece carried the idea a step

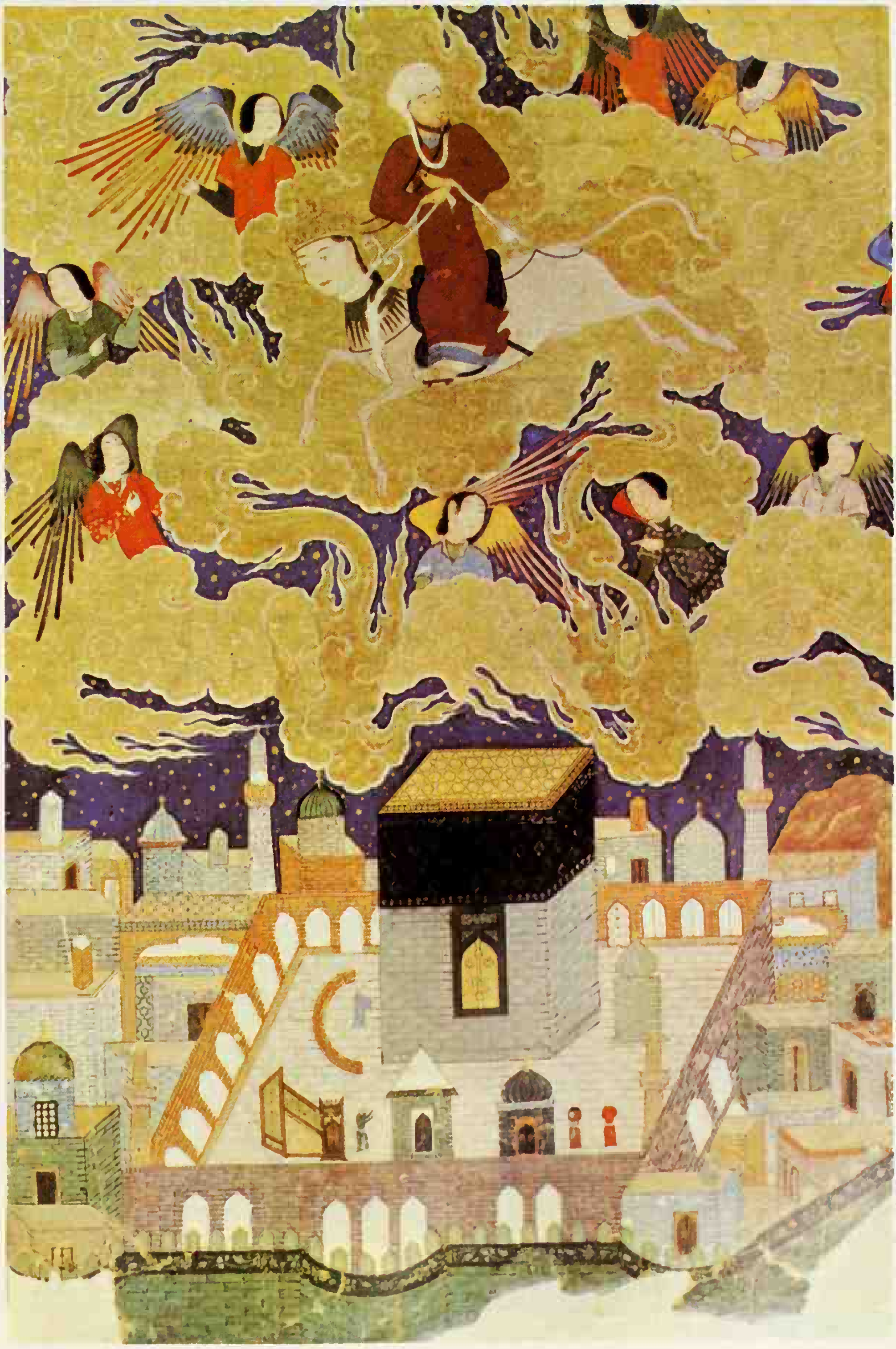
Life in the earthly paradise of the garden of Eden was instinctively innocent, with the Lord as a close companion

Facing page Regions above the clouds are allotted to the various gods of Hinduism; gained by a combination of correct morality and correct ritual, these celestial realms are 'consolation prizes' not the ultimate reward, and although a soul may dwell in them for aeons it must leave eventually to continue its pilgrimage in this world; Mt Kailasa (*far left*) one of the mountains of paradise, is Shiva's heaven, and Vaikuntha (*left*) is the paradise of Vishnu *Right* According to Islam, every Moslem will eventually reach a heaven, and no infidel will: the Koran promises the faithful a paradise of gardens, rivers and shady trees; men who go there will enjoy unlimited food and wine, and virtually unlimited harems: 15th century painting depicting the prophet Mohammed's ascension to heaven

farther. Pindar describes the Isles of the Blest as inhabited by a select few of the noble dead, with Cronus as their king. Here the Blest have actually died; the Golden Age motif, though still present in the person of Cronus, has receded somewhat; the Elysian realm is becoming a sort of heaven.

Within the mainstream of Greek religion, this idea remained tentative. But farther afield, similar beliefs are asserted with more conviction. Sometimes the good place, the 'otherwhere', has little or no explicit Golden Age aura and is more essentially a home of the dead. Where admission is a reward of virtue we approach the concept of heaven in its full Judaeo-Christian meaning: the eternal, blissful abode of all those among the dead whose lives have earned such a reward and of no others; the final beatitude; the ultimate goal.

The approach, however, is by degrees. At the more naive mythical levels, the good place may be simply the place of the dead in general. Everybody goes there, to an improved version of earthly life. The spirit realm of the Tumbuka, in Malawi, is an underworld where the departed are always young and never hungry or sad. Such beliefs occur also in New Guinea and New Caledonia. Some American Indians, the Ojibways and Choctaws for example, have kindred hopes about the region of sunset, or a happy hunting-ground in some secret country. These places are paradises and the homes of the dead, but scarcely heavens, because they are not selective. The goodness of the good place is not a reward.



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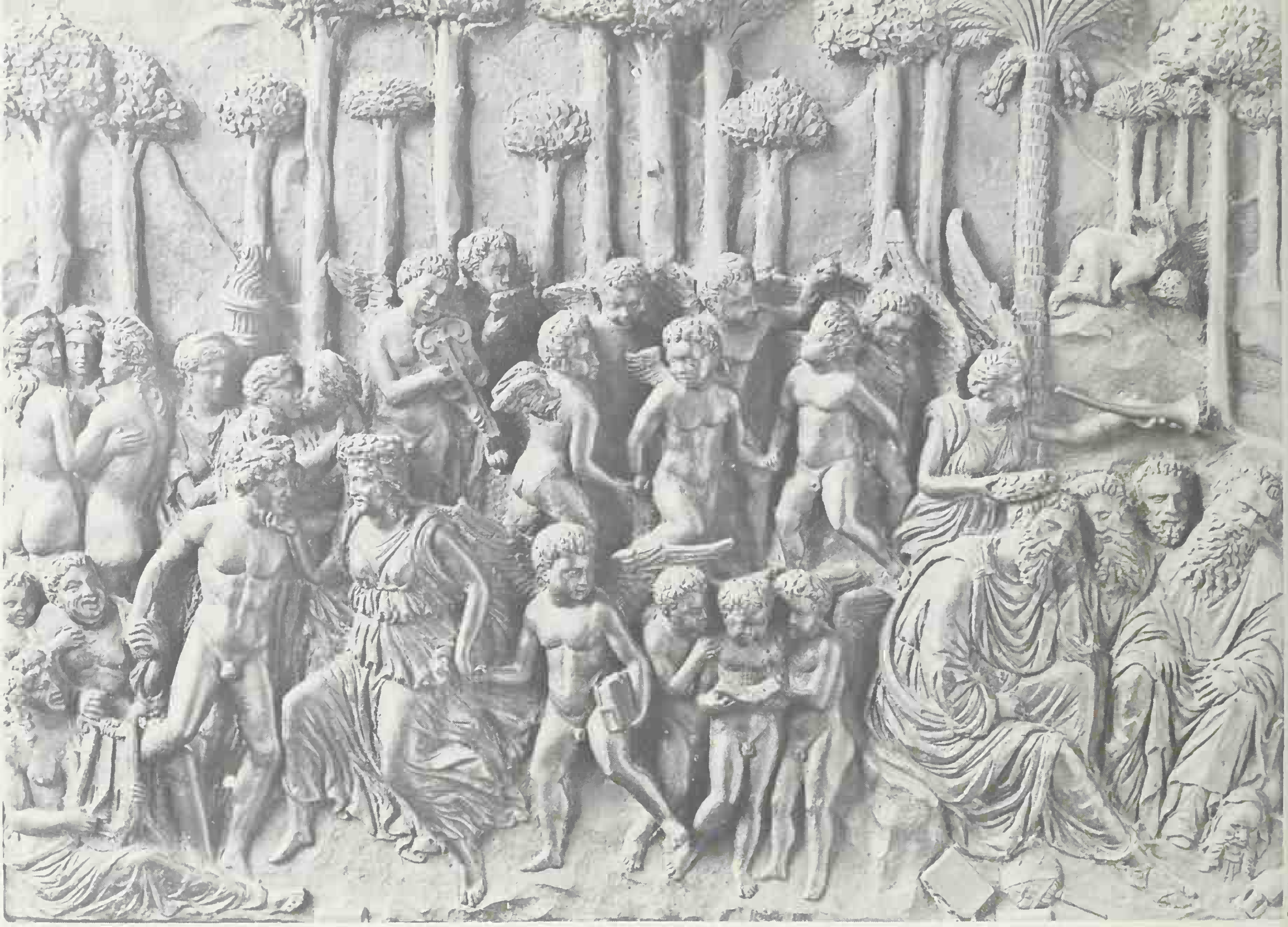


Giraudon

When selectivity does come in, it may still not take an ethical form. Admission may depend upon social rank. In the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean, aristocratic spirits go to 'sweet-scented Rohutu' and commoners go to 'foul-scented Rohutu'. In Peru, the mansions of the sun were reserved for the Incas and their nobles. Even when conduct is a passport, and the good place has to be earned, entry may depend on having performed a ritual, or undergone an initiation.

The motif of achieving the good place for one's afterlife through merit appears crudely in the Norse Valhalla, which was reached by martial prowess. Celestial dwellings for the dead are nearly always selective; the wicked and ignoble seldom go upward. In Egypt during the 3rd millennium BC, the pharaohs hoped to join the sun god and attend him on his journeys through space. While this is another instance of privilege through rank, texts show that the god's attitude to a deceased ruler depended partly on his virtues. Later, when similar hopes were extended to lesser men, this idea of judgement became more prominent (see BOOK OF THE DEAD; JUDGEMENT OF THE DEAD).

In the ancient Vedic religion of India the monarch of the dead was called Yama, and he reigned in the outer sky, a realm of light, over all the worthy departed. Their life was an enhancement of earthly life (as in most paradises of myth) with music, sexual fulfilment, and many more pleasures of the same type, and with no pain or care.

Hinduism allots regions above the clouds to Indra, Shiva and other deities. Each is a place of beauty and sensual joy, to be gained by a combination of correct ritual and correct morality. Buddhism inherited such schemes from Hinduism. In its advanced Mahayana form it has a graded series of paradises in a vague, non-astronomical sky. Ecstasies become more spiritual as earth is left farther below. The ascent is by way of virtue and holy meditation.

Salvation in the Sky

It is important to grasp that these quasi-heavens of Hinduism and Buddhism still belong to a mythological order of ideas. They are not ultimate, nor are they central to the philosophy of either religion. The goal of the highest quest is not personal happiness, but total release from the bondage of personality – Nirvana (see NIRVANA). The celestial realms, therefore, are mere consolation prizes. They appeal to those whose minds are not ready to transcend personal desire and descriptions of them are poetic, not doctrinal. They are also temporary. The soul may dwell in them for aeons, but if it goes there at all, it has not completed its pilgrimage and must eventually leave. The sole exception is in a popular form of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, the Pure Land sect (see AMIDA; JAPAN).

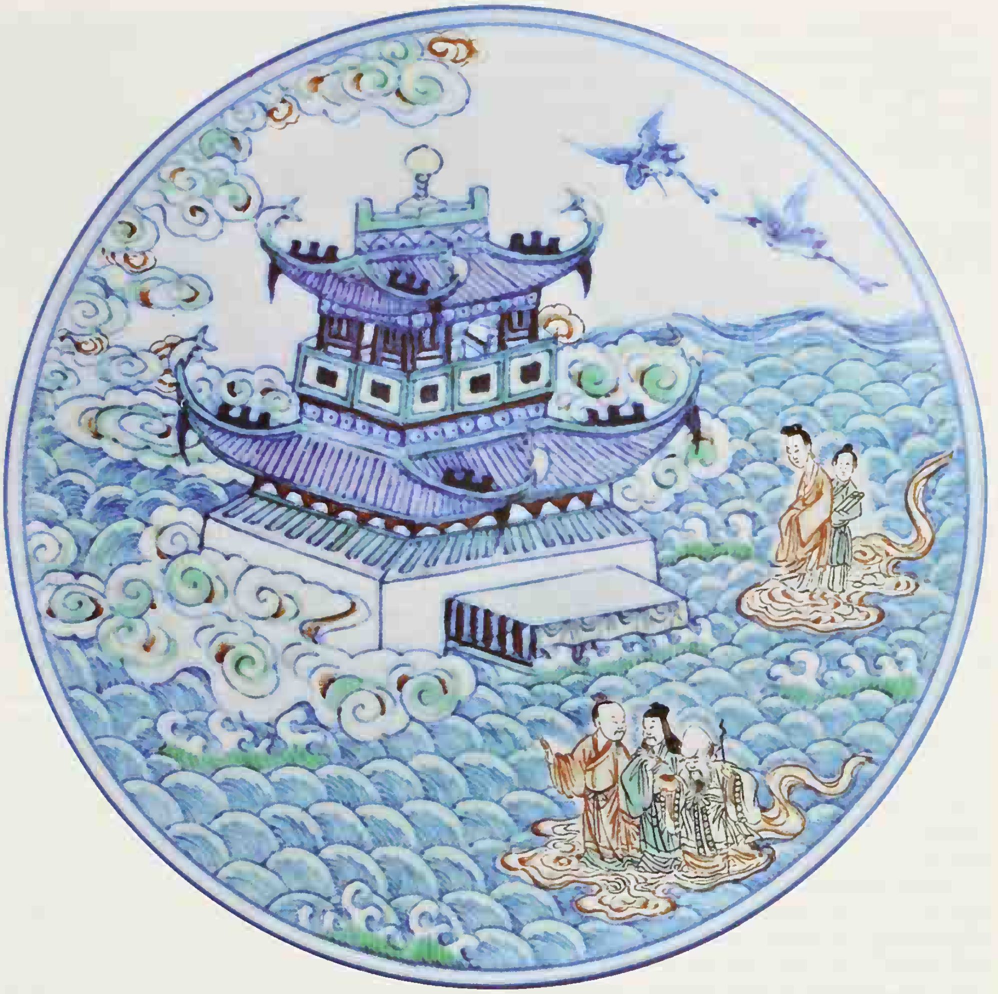
Only in the Mediterranean world does the good place acquire dogmatic status as the final reward of all mankind's spiritual strivings, with salvation consisting in its attainment, damnation in its loss. Heaven in this full sense is associated with Hebrew monotheism and ethical seriousness; with Hellenic firmness of outline and appetite for truth.

As long as Greece had no positive doctrine of immortality, and dismissed the dead as shades, Elysium could survive as a fantasy without raising major issues. But from the 6th century BC onward, the mystics of the Orphic cult (see ORPHEUS) were asserting such a doctrine and, for those who accepted it, the island-paradise would no longer serve. An abode for the blest on the familiar earth was out of keeping with Orphic ideas, which proclaimed salvation as a release from earthly bondage.

A more exotic home was offered to the right-living initiate. The Orphics adopted the word Elysium and altered its meaning, speaking of 'Elysian Fields' in an underworld of strange brightness, a happy resting place for pure spirits. But besides this – in Orphism apparently and in later Mystery cults undoubtedly – there was also a disposition to look upward. Gradually the good place was transferred to the sky, as in Asia.

The 'heavens' which the teachers of mystical doctrines drew into their systems were at first simply the upper regions. The prevailing astronomy made them concentric spheres, the spheres of the sun, moon, planets and fixed stars, rotating around the earth. Now, by becoming involved with notions about the soul's ascent, 'heaven' acquired a paradisal and even more-than-paradisal sense as well as an astronomical one. The Mysteries (with Egyptian influence from the cult of Osiris) and the gnostic schools of the early Christian era envisaged

Left **Elysian Fields of classical Greek mythology as a paradise, a relief by the Renaissance artist Andrea Riccio *Right* In Chinese belief, if the souls of the just were not sent back immediately to life on earth they might go to the dwelling place of the Immortals: 18th-century porcelain dish showing Shou-Lao, god of long-life, Fu-Hsing, god of happiness and Lu-Hsing, god of salaries, crossing the seas to their Palace of Immortality**



C. M. Dixon Victoria & Albert Museum

purified souls as rising. Instructed in the right passwords, the adept eluded the planetary demons of middle space. He soared (by grace of his chosen saviour, such as Mithras) to a superior heaven outside the visible system. Here he lived blissfully with the gods and fellow-initiates, for ever.

Heaven on Earth

Meanwhile, in the contemporary Hebrew world of ideas, two trends had emerged. When most of the Old Testament was composed, Israel's religion had no clear notion of personal immortality. Its only paradise was the lost garden. Heaven, as elsewhere, meant the sky, with the added concept of a pre-eminent heaven beyond, where God sat enthroned among his angels.

Judaism, as it grew after the exile in Babylon, slowly adopted a more cheerful outlook. Probably under Zoroastrian influence, it spoke of a future resurrection of the dead, a last judgement, a world to come. No unanimity on these matters was reached, nor has it ever been. Rabbinic tradition, however, has usually resisted world-spurning metaphysical speculations. It has its own place, Gan Eden, where the righteous will dwell after the resurrection. Gan Eden is, in effect, Adam's paradise restored. It will be revealed and opened on earth. Its citizens will go there as living people, not shades.

In the time of Jesus, such hopes were bound up with apocalyptic and Messianic dreams. The Lord's Anointed would appear, life would be transfigured, the dead would be raised, the earthly Kingdom of God would bring paradise regained... for the righteous. Jesus employed apocalyptic language himself, but to convey a message of spiritual revolution: the kingdom, he declared, is 'within you'. This teaching opened the way to a fusion of Hebrew and Hellenic motifs.

For the first Christians, the resurrection of Christ was proof of the coming resurrection of all the dead. When that happened the Last Judgement would allot them their destinies according to their deserts. The book of Revelation looks ahead not only to the Judgement, but to a material New Jerusalem for the resurrected saints. This, like the Jewish Gan Eden, will be the second paradise; Christ is the second Adam.

But when the resurrection and judgement did not come quickly, a question arose as to what was happening to the dead meanwhile. Christ himself had promised the penitent thief, one of the two criminals who were put to death with him, an immediate paradise (Luke, chapter 23), which must therefore be in existence. In the Christian apocalypse there is already a heaven apart from earth. It is, as ever, the celestial dwelling place of God. The New Jerusalem, when it comes, will come 'down out of heaven'. Until then the souls of the blessed have their heavenly places near God, where, a perfect society, they await final reunion with their bodies.

Christianity compiled its heaven from both Hebraic and Hellenic sources. From Judaism it adopted the region of the sky where God and his angels dwelt. From Greece the Christians took the celestial machinery, the spheres outside one another, the spiritual journeyings. The idea of seven heavens, with the seventh as proverbially the most exalted, is also Greek.

The Place Where God Is

While it carried the concept of heaven to its loftiest heights, Christianity never resolved certain queries. If the souls of the saved went to heaven at once, what would be the point of the future Last Judgement? It could only confirm a destiny already fixed. St Augustine maintained that, until the end of the world, spiritual life in heaven was an interim state, a foretaste, an answer which may have owed a debt to a tradition inherited via Judaism from Zoroastrianism.

Nor have Christians agreed about the qualifications for entry. Even baptism is not universally insisted upon, despite the words of Jesus that 'unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God' (John 3.5). Luther dismissed salvation by works in favour of salvation by faith. Calvin (with a curious reversion to the pagan Elysium) taught salvation by arbitrary divine choice. Islam, in its own version of the Judaeo-Christian scheme, distinguished seven heavens and various hells, temporary or permanent; and it made everything depend on faith. Every Moslem, however wicked, would get to a paradise of some kind sooner or later; no infidel would.

What happens in heaven? The paradises of mythology offer ardent, fairly civilized sensual delights, but Islam is the only major religion which does so. The Koran promises the faithful a reward suited to male Arab tastes. Their home will be a sort of splendid oasis – a true 'paradise' in the ancient sense – with gardens, rivers and trees. Men will wear silken robes and lie on couches, with unlimited fruit and wine, and virtually unlimited harems.

More recently, however, Moslem thinkers have joined Jews and Christians in a more abstract opinion. Heaven is the place where God is; so the final happiness is the beatific vision of God, the source of all good, and therefore completely satisfying.

There is no logical flaw in this conception of a Supreme Good from which the soul would never willingly turn away. But in practice it is hard to imagine a convincing heaven, because any perfection that we can specifically think of would pall. The German philosopher Schopenhauer observed that imaginative authors are more successful with hells than with heavens, because their own lives furnish materials for the former, but not the latter.

GEOFFREY ASHE

Fire, as the symbol of the deity, is sacred to the Parsees, whose religion is based on Zoroastrianism; believing that fire and earth should not be defiled, they expose the bodies of their dead to flesh-eating vultures in 'towers of silence'

Descendants of small groups of Persians who travelled to India in the 8th century AD to avoid conversion to Islam, the Parsees still retain their own traditions and religious customs, and their own family law which is distinct from that of Hindus and Moslems: a saffron mark symbolizing happiness and the goodwill of the household is placed on the brow of a visitor to a Parsee home

PARSEES

CONCENTRATED mainly in several towns of western India, in the Bombay region, and also in Pakistan, where they settled in far fewer numbers, Parsees consider themselves to be descendants of small groups of people who emigrated from Persia in the 8th century AD in order to avoid forceful conversion to Islam, and to retain Zoroastrianism, their ancient religion (see ZOROASTRIANISM). The details of their escape from Persia and perilous sea voyage to India are largely legendary. It is believed that they first landed on the island of Diu off the south coast of Kathiawar, and that from there they sailed to Gujarat and obtained the local ruler's permission to settle at a place near Sanjan on the Gujarat coast. The first group of refugees was later joined by others who fled from the increasing oppression and religious intolerance of the first caliphs of the Abbasid family.

From Sanjan, Parsees spread subsequently as settlers and merchants both northwards to places such as Navsari, and southwards to the region of the present Bombay. Wherever they settled they established fire temples and by about 1300 AD there were Parsee colonies in various parts of western India. In the early 14th century Moslem invaders defeated the Hindu overlords of the Parsee of Sanjan, and the latter had to flee once more. After various vicissitudes they settled at Bansda.

Royal and Ancient

It is believed that in the 15th century the Parsee community in India was strengthened by further emigrants from Persia, and that these new arrivals brought about a revival of religious practices abandoned in the Indian environment. At that time there were also conversions of Hindus to the Zoroastrian faith, but in later times such proselytizing activities ceased and the Parsees did not admit any new converts to their community. The first references to Parsees by Europeans are contained in accounts by Portuguese writers of the 16th century, who mention a class of merchants and shopkeepers of Persian origin living in the towns of western India.

A great opportunity for the Parsee traders came with the establishment of European business enterprises. Some of them entered the service of foreign companies, and others developed trade in Western goods on their own account. Parsees had begun to settle in Bombay under the Portuguese (1530–1666) and several Parsee families attained high positions in the town which ever since, and throughout the period of British rule, has been their main stronghold. The Parsees, more than any other community of Indian traders, were responsible for the development of the trade of Bombay, and particularly the trade connections with China, which Parsee merchants visited as early as 1756. Next to Bombay the port of Surat became an important Parsee centre, and early in the 18th century they also spread along the Malabar coast and some families established themselves in Madras. Less inhibited than Hindus by social and ritual restrictions, the Parsees found it comparatively easy to make contact with Europeans, and they were among the first to adopt a Western style of living without, however, abandoning their religious faith and their cohesion as a distinct community.

A minor threat to that cohesion had appeared in the 18th century over the matter of calculating the calendar. Because of the long separation between the Parsees of India and the small Zoroastrian community remaining in Persia, a discrepancy had developed in their calendars, and the Parsees were one month behind their co-religionists in Persia in commencing their New Year. For a long time little notice was taken of this fact, but in 1746 a Persian came to Surat and together with a group of Parsee priests introduced the calendar as observed by the Persian Zoroastrians. The members of this group called themselves *Kadmis*, 'ancient', whereas the bulk of the Parsees, who became known as *Shehenshais*, 'royal', stuck to their old dates. A division into two sects arose from this schism over the calendars and at times they engaged in angry disputes and discouraged intermarriage between their members. Later amicable relations were restored, but the main annual festivities are still observed on different dates. The Shehenshai sect greatly outnumbers the Kadmis, but some very prominent families belong to the latter.

When the ancestors of the Parsees first settled in India they spoke Persian, but being a small community they gradually adopted the language of their host country and became speakers of Gujarati. Pahlavi, the language of the Sassanian period of Persia (3rd to 6th centuries AD), was retained as a ritual language but the Pahlavi texts, which the priests had to learn by heart, were no longer fully understood. There are also Zoroastrian texts written in modern Persian and in Gujarati.

The influence of the Indian environment also affected the social organization of the Parsee community. Little is known of its internal government during the centuries following the arrival in India, but by the beginning of the 18th century it was – on the model of a Hindu caste – controlled by a *panchayat*, an assembly of a certain number of leading men. It is believed that a properly constituted panchayat was first formed in Bombay after the islands passed into British hands, when the number of Parsees had begun to increase greatly. The panchayat exercised considerable influence, not only in Bombay but also in several towns of Gujarat where Parsees had settled. As Bombay grew in importance under British rule this city became the Parsee headquarters, and whenever any dissensions or differences of opinion arose the advice of the panchayat was asked for and followed. In religious matters, however, the priests of the small town of Navsari held their own as the supreme authority.

Hindu Influence

Towards the end of the 18th century, the panchayat sought and received confirmation of its power from the British authorities, and in the course of the 19th century it initiated a number of reforms designed to eradicate practices which had grown up in imitation of Hindu and Moslem customs, but which were deemed to conflict with the purity of the Zoroastrian religion.

With the gradual extension of the British legal system to all aspects of Indian life the panchayat became obsolete as a legislative body. In order to codify Parsee customary law relating to marriage and succession, a Parsee Law Commission was instituted, and its findings were incorporated in a number of Acts which were passed by the Legislative Council of India in 1865. With this, the Parsees' status as a separate community with its own family law, distinct from that of Hindus and Moslems, was formally acknowledged.

Although the Parsees have adjusted themselves to some extent to Hindu ways of living, they retained until recent times certain items of dress which set them apart from other communities. Only those who were entirely Westernized abandoned their traditional style of clothing. They conformed to Hindu dietary habits in that they ate neither beef nor pork, but there was no prejudice against the drinking of alcoholic beverages. Like Hindus they regard eating as a religious act, during which the orthodox do not engage in conversation.

Each Man Must Take Sides

The original roots of Zoroastrianism lie in a cultural environment similar to that of Vedic Hinduism, but the character which it assumed in its formative period bears the imprint of its prophet and founder Zarathustra (whom the Greeks called Zoroaster), a priest who lived in eastern Iran sometime between 1000 BC and 600 BC. The Parsees refer to him as Zartusht. He was a reformer who attacked the old Indo-Iranian religion, particularly the practice of cruel animal sacrifices, and advocated a break with the worship of the old gods. Legend tells of his retreat into the mountain fastnesses of Iran, where he strove for enlightenment in a state of ecstatic trance, and saw in a vision Ahura Mazdah, the supreme spirit of good, who is diametrically opposed to Ahriman, the spirit of evil (see AHRIMAN).

A belief in the opposing powers of good and evil, who fight for domination over human beings, reflects the dualistic trend in Zoroastrianism, but already there were certain contradictions in Zarathustra's teaching, and Ahura Mazdah appeared standing in one sense above the contrast between good and evil. The modern Parsees refute the characterization of their religion as dualism and describe their faith as pure monotheism. They are certain of the final victory of good over evil, but each man has to decide where he stands in the struggle between Ahura Mazdah and Ahriman.

The sacred scriptures of the Zoroastrians are known as the *Avesta*, parts of which stem from different times. The original texts were written in Avestan, an extinct language understood by only a few Parsee scholars, while the commentaries were written in Pahlavi. Belief in the existence of the one supreme deity Ahura Mazdah, now usually referred to as Ohrmazd (or Ormuzd) and credited with the creation of the spiritual and material worlds, is a basic element in Parsee doctrine (see OHRMAZD). He is the source of all blessings and good things and Parsees address themselves to him in all their prayers.

Ohrmazd stands at the pinnacle of a hierarchy of celestial beings which consists of seven *Amesha spentas*, 'holy immortals', and 30 *Yazatas*, 'adorable ones'. These divine beings have been compared to archangels and angels, but their status is higher and they are more independent than the angels of Christianity. They are the rulers, fashioners, protectors and preservers of the creation of Ohrmazd, and Parsees make offerings to them and invite them to visit their houses. The 30 Yazatas preside over natural objects and give their names to the days of the month; Zarathustra, alone among human beings, is now regarded as one of them. These celestial beings interact with mankind and it is through their aid that man learns to know Ohrmazd, to dispel demons and to prosper in this world.

The most prominent among them are Mihr (the ancient Iranian god Mithra – see MITHRAS), Srosh and Rashu. They are the judges of the dead, each with a specific function. Mihr administers justice at the heavenly court, and exposes those guilty of having broken a promise. He saves the souls of truthful persons when they come to the Bridge of Judgement, where he and Srosh await the departed. Rashu holds in his hand the golden balance on which he weighs the good and evil deeds of the souls.

Towers of Silence

Distinct from these prominent celestial figures are the hosts of unnamed *fravashis*, guardian spirits who have left the heavenly sphere and chosen to move to the world of humans where they assist men in the fight against evil. The Parsees believe that each man has a guardian spirit, who leaves him at death to return to the company of the fravashis; but he remains a link between living and dead, and is begged to convey offerings to the departed.

Parsees have often been referred to as 'fire worshippers', but they resent this description and point out that though fire is an important element in their cult, it is a symbol of the deity and not an object of worship. As among the Vedic Hindus, fire occupied a central position in all rituals of the ancient Zoroastrians, and it was not always easy to distinguish between the concepts of the fire as such and the divinity presiding over it.

Among the Parsees today fire is held to be sacred, and the so-called 'fire temples' are buildings for the preservation of the sacred fire. In Gujarat they do not differ greatly from the dwelling houses of the wealthier families. Inside they have an outer and an inner hall. In the centre of the latter is a solid stone stool and on this stands an urn of copper, brass or silver, in which burns the sacred fire fed with sandalwood and other kinds of wood.

There are three types of sacred fires. The lowest grade is consecrated fire in a dwelling house or small family temple; this is the hearth fire which a Parsee never allows to die. If he changes his place of residence he carries his fire with him to his new abode. Fires of greater sacredness burn in temples which should be built wherever numbers of Parsee families are living. They are made of fires taken from a priest's house and the houses of three families of other classes, a process of consecration accompanied by the recitation of sacred texts.

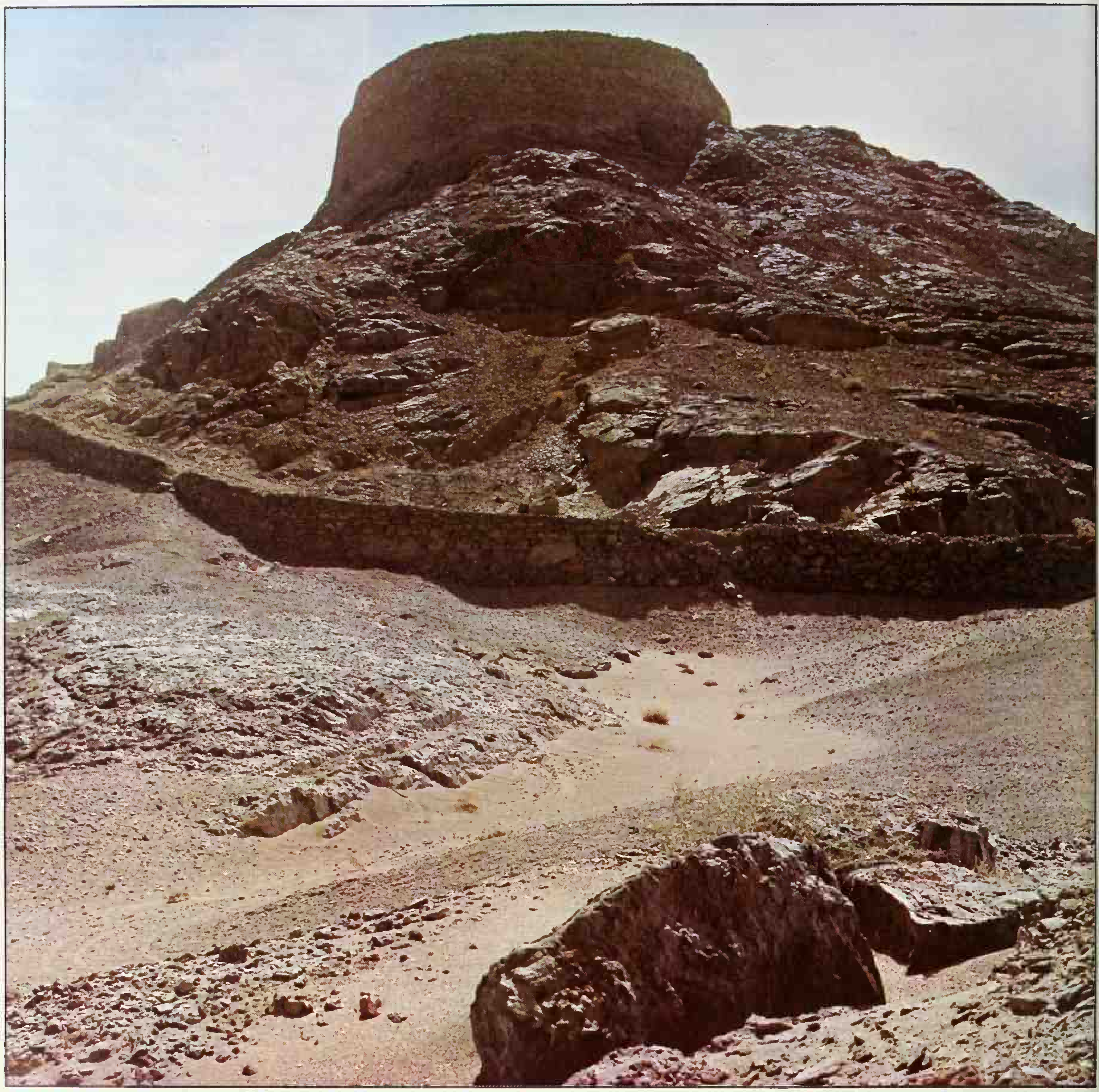
The fire of the highest grade burns only in the most important temples, of which there are less than a dozen. At least 16 different fires are needed to prepare this fire, and ceremonies and rites of consecration are complicated and expensive. A sword and maces hang on the wall of the temple, and there is a brass bell which the priest rings at each watch when he performs a ceremony near the sacred fire.

Only priests may enter the sanctuary where the fire is burning, but many devout laymen pay frequent visits to a fire temple, particularly on the four days in the month which are sacred to fire. The worshippers, both men and women, bring offerings of sandalwood and money. In return the priest gives them ashes from the sacred fire, and these they apply to their forehead and eyelashes. Many of the smaller Parsee communities have no temples, but assemble for prayers in the open.

Popperfoto

All the main phases in a Parsee's life are marked by rites and ceremonies *Left* A young girl initiate: she has been invested with a sacred shirt and a sacred cord woven from lamb's wool by women of the priestly class *Right* Parsee wedding: at least two priests officiate at the ceremony, and the blessings are pronounced in Old Persian and Sanskrit; grains of rice, symbols of abundance, are scattered over the couple

Popperfoto



Towers of silence are the most famous sacred buildings of the Parsees; believing that corpses should not defile either earth or fire, they place the bodies of their dead in these structures, where they are exposed to the sun and to flesh-eating vultures

The most famous sacred buildings of the Parsees are the so-called 'towers of silence': large structures of stone or brick situated on hills and usually surrounded by gardens. In these the bodies of the dead are exposed to the sun and to flesh-eating vultures, for according to Parsee belief corpses should not defile either earth or fire. These roofless towers consist of an outer wall some 300 feet in circumference and a deep pit lined with masonry. Dead bodies are laid on a stone platform which is divided into three rows, the outermost for men, the next for women, and the innermost for children. The construction of a tower of silence is accompanied by elaborate ceremonies, and after the first dead body has been deposited, the tower is closed to all, including Parsee priests, with the exception of the corpse-bearers who enter it through a high iron door. When a body has been placed on the appropriate stone slab, the bearers leave and the vultures soon descend upon the corpse and tear the flesh from the bones. Whatever remains is thrown into a central pit filled with sand and charcoal.

Parsees living in small rural communities which lack such funeral towers, and all those living in East Africa and other countries overseas, bury their dead in coffins. Wherever there are funeral towers a special ceremony in honour of the departed is performed on a day comparable to the All Souls' Day of Christianity. Parsees go there to offer prayers for dead relatives and friends, and those who have lost a relative during the year spread carpets and hold a feast in the yard or garden round the tower.

There are several festivals which are celebrated on specific dates. One of these is the Sun Festival, which is traceable to the Persian worship of the sun, now personified by Mihr. During another of these feasts, held in honour of the water spirit, Parsees go to the seashore or to a riverbank, and throw coconuts, sugar and flowers into the water. Women, who have made a vow to do

Popperfoto

The Parsee priesthood is hereditary, and all its members are said to be descended from a priest who was one of the original settlers in India; full-time priests are supposed to have beards and dress entirely in white: initiation of a Parsee youth

so if their affairs prosper, make sweet cakes, some of which they send to friends, and throw the rest into the sea or into a river. On a festival known as the Fire Feast Parsees go to a fire temple, with offerings of sandalwood, and pray before the fire. The rich distribute money to the priests and to poor Parsees who gather there. The so-called Animal Festival is the culmination of a month in which Parsees show special kindness to animals, feeding stray dogs with milk, and cattle with grass. During this time the very devout abstain altogether from animal food, while others observe this type of abstinence on four specific days. Besides these principal feasts there are six seasonal festivals, each of which lasts five days, during which all members of the local community meet on terms of equality and join in a common feast.

Purification Rites

Every religious rite has to be conducted by a priest, and there is a hereditary priesthood that is completely distinct from the laity. All Parsee priests in India are believed to be descended from a priest who is supposed to have been among the original settlers in Sanjan. Different branches of the original family have been allocated to districts in each of the Parsee settlements, in which members of one branch alone may serve as priests. In each of these districts there is a high priest whose office is hereditary and passes from father to eldest son. He does not leave his headquarters to visit the priests under his charge, but hears and settles any complaints against his priests that are brought before him.

While members of the class of priests may engage in secular business, no one born into a family of laymen can become a priest and officiate at religious rites. Until recently it was not customary for the daughters of priests to marry laymen, but the sons of priests were free to take wives of lay status. Members of the priestly class who are full-time priests are supposed to have beards and to dress entirely in white. Those who engage in secular work, shave their beards and wear colours, are disqualified from performing the higher priestly offices.

The functions of a priest include reciting prayers in the temples, and in the houses of laymen, performing the rites for the dead, and conducting ceremonies such as weddings and initiations. There are two orders of priests, known respectively as *Herbad* and *Mobed*. Among the modern Parsees these represent two stages in a ranking system, the Herbad being junior and inferior to the Mobed. But in the Sassanian period of Iran there was a distinction in kind and function between the two classes of priests. The Mobed were the magicians, who had specific functions at animal sacrifices, and the Herbad were the fire priests, found mainly in south-western Iran. In the 3rd century the two classes became fused, and the Parsees have no trace of the original distinction between Herbad and Mobed.

The son of any Parsee priest can become a Herbad if he has learnt by heart a large number of chapters of the *Avesta*, and various parts of other scriptures. He must then undergo a ceremony of purification. Two priests and several male friends and relatives take the novice to the purifying place, which is an open enclosure strewn with sand. A dog, cow's urine, holy ashes, pomegranate leaves, sticks of a special kind and some bathing vessels are required for the elaborate rite which is to be performed there. A confession of sins, and lengthy prayers for purity of mind and deeds are part of the ceremony. Afterwards the novice is taken to a fire temple where he spends nine days and nights in retreat. He then returns to his home, but after a short time undergoes a second purification. At the end of this he is clothed in pure white garments and presented with flowers. The final ordination, which must be conducted by a high priest, then follows.

When a youth has been a Herbad for two or three years, and has learnt additional parts of the scriptures, he may be ordained as a Mobed or full priest. This includes undergoing further purification rites as well as reciting sacred texts. When the ordination has been completed the new priest is fully qualified to perform all sacerdotal functions. From then on he must never be bareheaded and never shave his head or face. He is supposed to retain his state of purity and eat no food cooked by a person who is not of priestly class.

All the main phases in a Parsee's life are marked by rites and ceremonies. Between the ages of seven and nine boys and girls are initiated into the Zoroastrian faith. The ceremony consists of investing the child with a sacred shirt and a sacred cord, and this is followed by a ritual bath and offering of prayers by a priest. Both betrothal and marriage are the occasion of elaborate ceremonies. At least two priests are required for the wedding rite, and they pronounce the marriage blessings in Old Persian and in Sanskrit. The questions addressed to bride and bridegroom are in Persian and so are their answers. Parsees have not permitted polygamy since 1865, but a widowed or divorced person may remarry.

Bowing to the Dead

Parsee funeral rites are relatively simple. The basic principle is to dispose of the dead body with the least possible risk of harm to the living. As a precaution all deaths are held to be caused by infection, and care is taken that people should come into as little contact as possible with the dead bodies. When death is approaching, a prayer of repentance should be said by the dying person or, if he is unable to do so, by a priest or a relative on his behalf. A short time after death the corpse is washed, and dressed in a clean set of clothes which are destroyed afterwards.

The corpse is then given into the charge of two persons who place it on stone slabs, or the earthen floor, on the ground level of the house. Priests say the prayers for the dead before the corpse is taken out, and a dog is brought to look at the face of the deceased in order to drive away evil spirits, a custom that recalls the great respect paid to dogs in old Iranian religion. The two attendants then carry the corpse out of the house and hand it over to four bier-carriers, who must be Parsees. If the distance to the tower of silence is considerable a wheeled vehicle may be used for the transport of the corpse; where wooden bullock carts were used for this purpose they were afterwards broken up and the pieces buried.

The funeral procession is headed by the corpse-carriers; behind them walk the priests followed by the relatives. At the tower of silence, all bow to the dead, but only the bier-carriers enter the tower, and deposit the body on the appropriate place. The clothes are torn off and the body is left to the vultures.

Three days after the funeral a ceremony of prayers is held in the house of mourning and the following morning white clothes, drinking vessels, fruit and wheatcakes are consecrated to the dead in the local fire temple. There is a belief that for three days after death the soul of the departed remains within the precincts of this world, and that at dawn after the third night following death it reaches the Bridge of Judgement which connects this earth with the unseen world. There the soul's fate is decided, and the relatives of the deceased try to influence this decision by the recitation of prayers addressed to the celestial judges. The righteous are believed to enter into a state of bliss in a heaven peopled by divine beings, and those whose deeds have been evil are confined to a place of darkness and suffering.

According to Zoroastrian belief punishment in hell does not last for all eternity; there will be a final renewing of the world, when evil will be overcome and the entire creation assume the quality of Ohrmazd, the source of all goodness and happiness. The dualism of good and evil is considered capable of ultimate resolution, and the world view of the Parsees is basically optimistic.

Unlike Hinduism, which extols asceticism and favours a pessimistic attitude to life, the ideology of the Parsees is basically life-affirming, and its dualistic trends do not imply a confrontation of mind against matter. The flesh is not regarded as evil, celibacy is abhorred, and there is more equality between men and women than in either Hinduism or Islam. The life-affirming element in Zoroastrianism is consistent with the role of the Parsees as the most progressive ethnic element, economically and materially, in the whole of India. Their contribution to the development of commerce and modern industry, scholarship and art is out of all proportion to their numbers.

C. VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

FURTHER READING: Sir R.P. Masani, *The Religion of the Good Life, Zoroastrianism* (Allen & Unwin, 1938); D. Karaka, *History of the Parsis* (AMS Press, 1977, c1884).

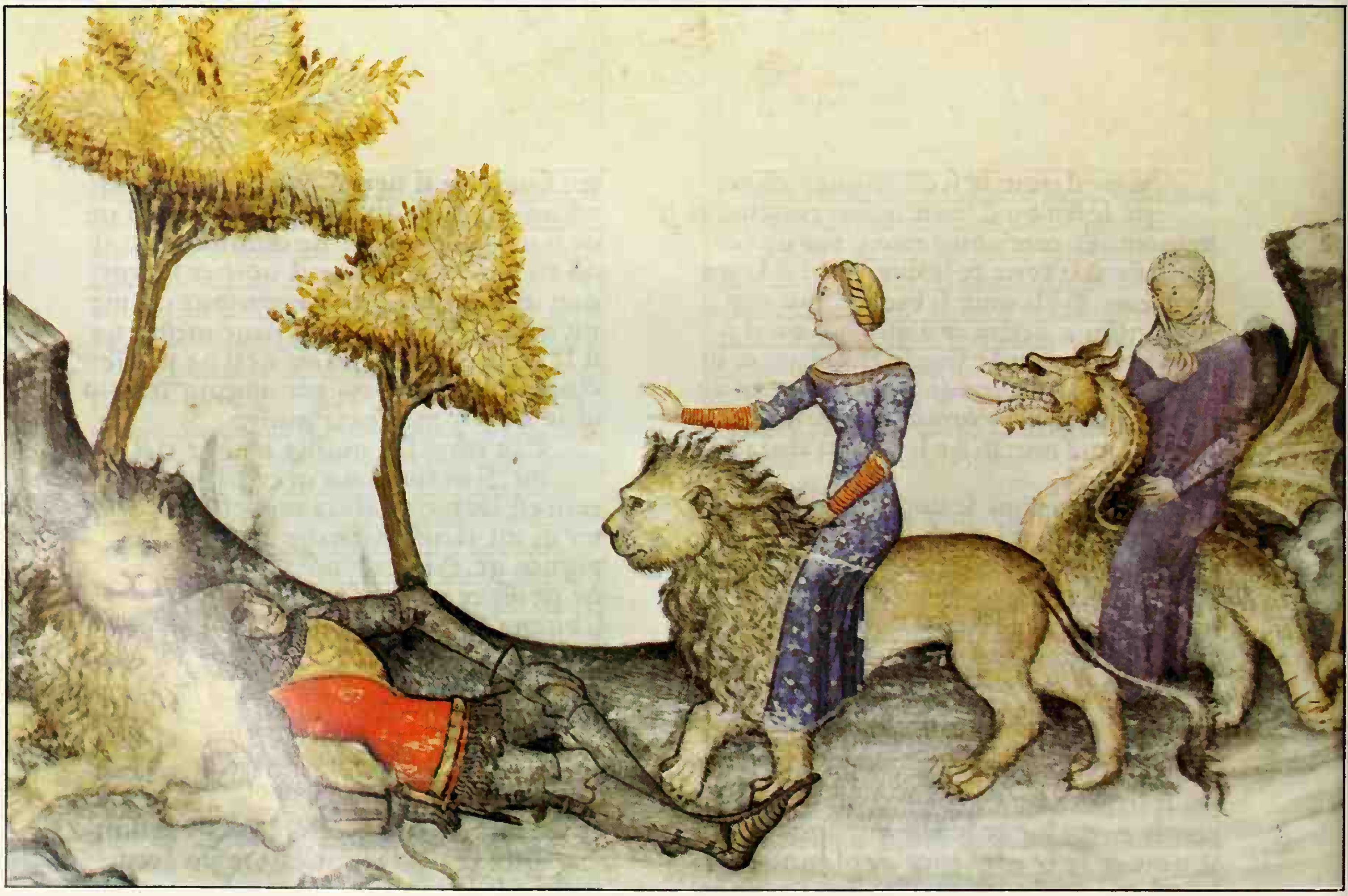
PARSIFAL

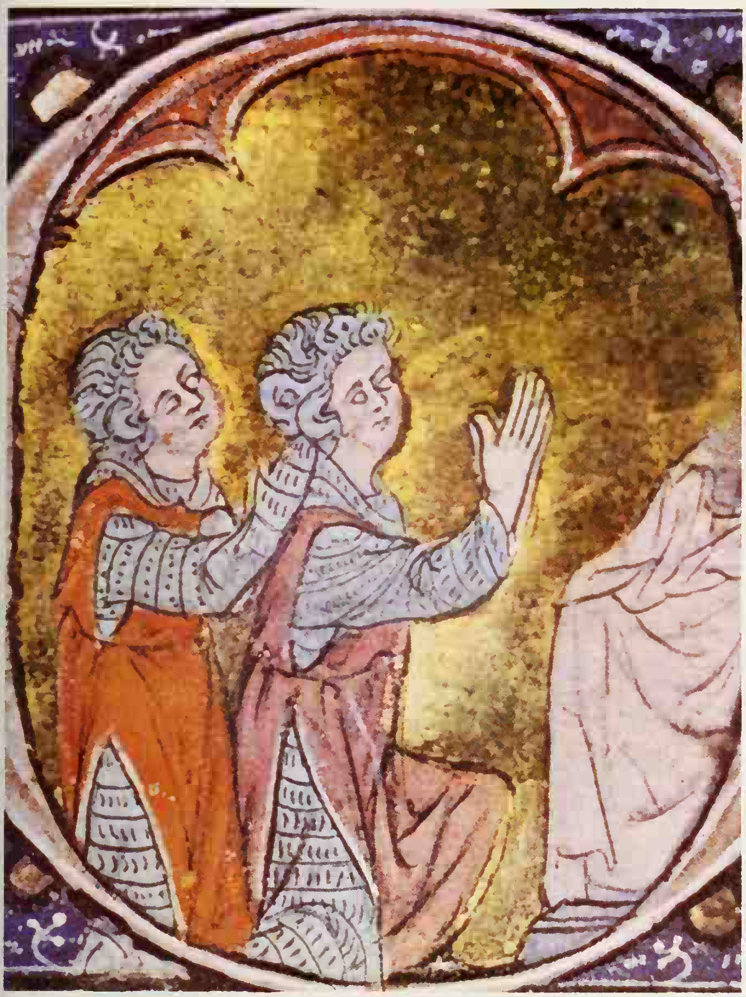
PARSIFAL is one of the leading characters of Arthurian romance. His name appears as variants of Perceval in French and English, Parzival in German. In the basic story Perceval's father has been killed about the time of his birth and his mother takes refuge with her son in the mountains of Wales. Perceval grows up to be strong and handsome but quite ignorant of the ways of the world and of the rank to which his parentage entitles him. One day he meets a band of Arthur's knights and goes off with them. At Arthur's court he astonishes everyone by both his personal beauty and his uncouth manners. After many perils, he learns all the skills and courtesies of chivalry.

In a bewildering variety of stories, not all of which are mentioned here, the rude and rustic youth becomes the hero of the quest for the Holy Grail. The earliest version is the *Conte del Graal*, a poem by Chrétien de Troyes written c 1180, which tells the story of Perceval's adventures at the castle of the Fisher King, his failure to ask the right question about the Grail, and his return to Arthur's court, where he is reproached by the Loathly Damsel (see GRAIL). Perceval swears the Quest: he will search till he finds the castle again, he will ask the question, he will not spend two nights in the same place till all is accomplished.

Chrétien then breaks off to recount the adventures of Gawain. When we next meet Perceval, five years later, he is in sorry state. He has done many deeds of prowess, has sent 60 knights as prisoners to Arthur; but he has failed in the quest and has forgotten God and never been to church. It is

Parsifal experiences many adventures in his search for the Grail before finally achieving spiritual maturity: in a vision he sees the New Law based on the teachings of Christ, represented by a young woman riding a lion, and the 'first Law that was put aside as soon as Jesus Christ had introduced the New', symbolized by an old woman riding on a serpent: illustration in a 14th century French manuscript





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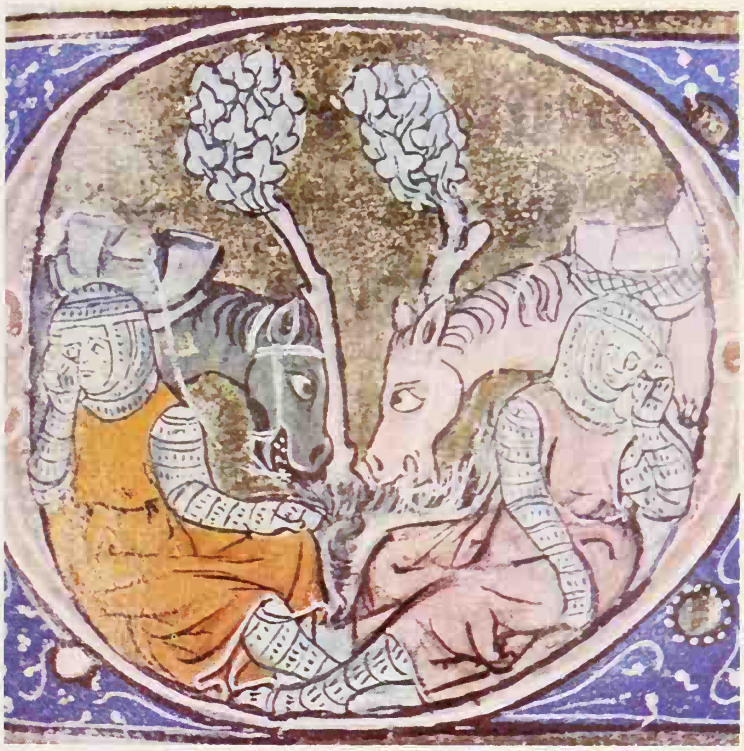

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In a bewildering variety of stories Parsifal, who is a beautiful but uncouth young man when he first arrives at Arthur's court, becomes one of the chief figures in the legend of the quest for the Holy Grail: Illustrations from a 13th century manuscript show Parsifal with Hector (*above*) after the two knights have exhausted each other in combat and (*left*) praying with Galahad, the best knight in the world. In the French *Queste del Saint Graal* Galahad was the only one fully to penetrate the mystery of the Grail

Good Friday and he does not know it. A group of penitents chide him for being in arms on a holy day. On their advice, he goes to a hermit who lives nearby. Very repentant, he confesses he has done 'nothing but evil' for five years, and has done nothing to obtain pardon. The hermit, who turns out to be his uncle, tells Perceval his sin lies in his unwittingly having caused his mother to die of sadness. From this came his failure to ask the question and all the trouble thereafter. The hermit explains that the Fisher King's father is he who is served with the grail, sustained for 15 years on the sacred host alone carried in the vessel. He enjoins the good knightly life on Perceval who does penance and receives communion.

Here Chrétien's unfinished story ends. Various authors attempted 'continuations'. In one, Perceval comes a second time to the castle and succeeds in mending, save for one small crack, a broken sword. The Fisher King had wounded himself while trying to repair this sword, which had belonged to the evil Lord of the Red Tower, the slayer of the Fisher's brother. Perceval undertakes a mission of vengeance, finds a smith who repairs the remaining crack and kills the Lord of the Red Tower. On his return, the Fisher King is cured and reveals himself as Perceval's uncle. The young hero is crowned as his successor and when at length he dies the Grail is carried up to heaven.

The French prose romance *Perlesvaus* (c 1200) has a remarkable ending which tells of Perceval's visit to an enchanted island, a Christianized version of a pagan Welsh 'otherworld'. Here dwell men of incredible age, with hair and beard 'whiter than new fallen snow (and yet) young of face . . . they all seemed to be of the age of thirty-two years'. Astounding things occur in this monastery-like community: an armed knight lives in a cask of glass, a golden chain and crown descend from the ceiling, a pit opens in the floor and 'the greatest and most dolorous cries that anyone ever heard' issue from it. The two 'masters', who know all about Perceval and the Grail, tell him that he cannot leave unless he promises to return as soon as he sees a ship with a sail bearing a red cross. If he does, he will have the crown and be king of a nearby island, 'very abundant in all good things'; if he does not rule as well as the present king, who has been 'chosen to reign in a greater realm', he will be sent to the Island of Suffering, the cries from which he has just heard. Perceval agrees and – the Fisher King having died in the meantime – returns to the Grail castle where a voice tells him that 'the Holy Grail shall appear here no longer but within a short time you will know well where it will be'. One day the ship of the red cross appears and Perceval sets sail. In the words of the American scholar R. S. Loomis: 'The author declares that never did earthly man know what became of Perceval and that the history speaks of him no more. But, of course, he has already informed us of Perceval's destination, namely, the isle of the ageless elders, and has intimated clearly that there he will find the Grail.'

In the *Queste del Saint Graal*, a prose work probably written between 1215 and 1230, the hero is Galahad, the ascetic knight and perfect Christian who alone is pure enough to follow the quest to its ultimate and most sublime end. The *Queste* asserts the supremacy of the loftiest spiritual values over the worldly virtues of chivalry and courtly love. In it Perceval plays a secondary but still important and flattering role. Only he and Bors prove worthy to accompany Galahad to the Grail castle where a marvellous Mass is said: Christ himself administers the sacrament from the Grail and the Fisher King is cured by a drop of blood from the Holy Lance. Later, Galahad achieves the final ecstasy of gazing into the Grail and dies as Grail and Lance ascend to heaven. Perceval dies a year later and Bors returns home alone.

The Hatred of God

Of all the versions, the one to which readers today will most warmly respond is probably the monumental poem *Parzival*, written between 1200 and 1212 by Wolfram von Eschenbach, a poor Bavarian knight of very individual outlook and mode of expression. The work brings together a host of characters and themes illuminating Parsifal's own personality and progress.

In the first part of the poem, apart from the fact that Wolfram describes the deeds and fate of Parsifal's father, the outline broadly follows the sequence of events as told by Chrétien. But there are many important differences in detail and attitude.

Of these the most significant are Parsifal's marriage to Condwiramurs (instead of a passing affair with a lady named Blancheflor) and his questioning of God, instead of mere forgetfulness and neglect. Throughout his adventures, Parsifal remains devotedly and passionately in love with his wife. The poet continually reminds us of this – there is, for instance, a remarkable passage in which drops of blood on the snow recall Condwiramurs' complexion to Parsifal's imagination – and the hero is reunited with his wife and sons when the quest is accomplished. And until he meets the hermit Trevrizent, his uncle, Parsifal again and again asks 'What is God?' He does so when his mother tells him the Almighty is lord of the little birds as well as of men; he does so, very differently, when his humiliation at failing to ask the right questions at the Grail castle plunges him into doubt and despair. To Gawain he says: 'Alas, what is God? Were He almighty, He would never have exposed you and me to such disgrace, could He rule with power. I have devoted myself to His service because I was hopeful of His grace. Now I will forswear His service: if He hates me, that hatred I will bear.' This strikes a very 'modern' note, as far from the mystifying enchantment of the romances as it is from the exalted otherworldliness of the Galahad *Queste*.

Wolfram is a realist with a vivid imagination, almost, you could say, a Christian humanist. The core of the poem is Trevrizent's long discourse, the burden of which is that compassion is the heart of the good life and pride, thinking or unthinking, the greatest sin. Throughout the poem the characters develop. Cundrie, for instance, the Loathly Damsel, who in the earlier scenes is even fiercer in her reproaches than in Chrétien's verses, appears towards the end as a figure recalling Mary Magdalen. She kneels before Parsifal and foretells that he will be Lord of the Grail which, on finding the castle again and curing the King with his question, he truly becomes. Warm human relationships and the love of man and woman join with knightly perfection and the spiritual maturity of the love of God to achieve a sane and happy balance of the claims of this world and the next.

C. DE HOGHTON

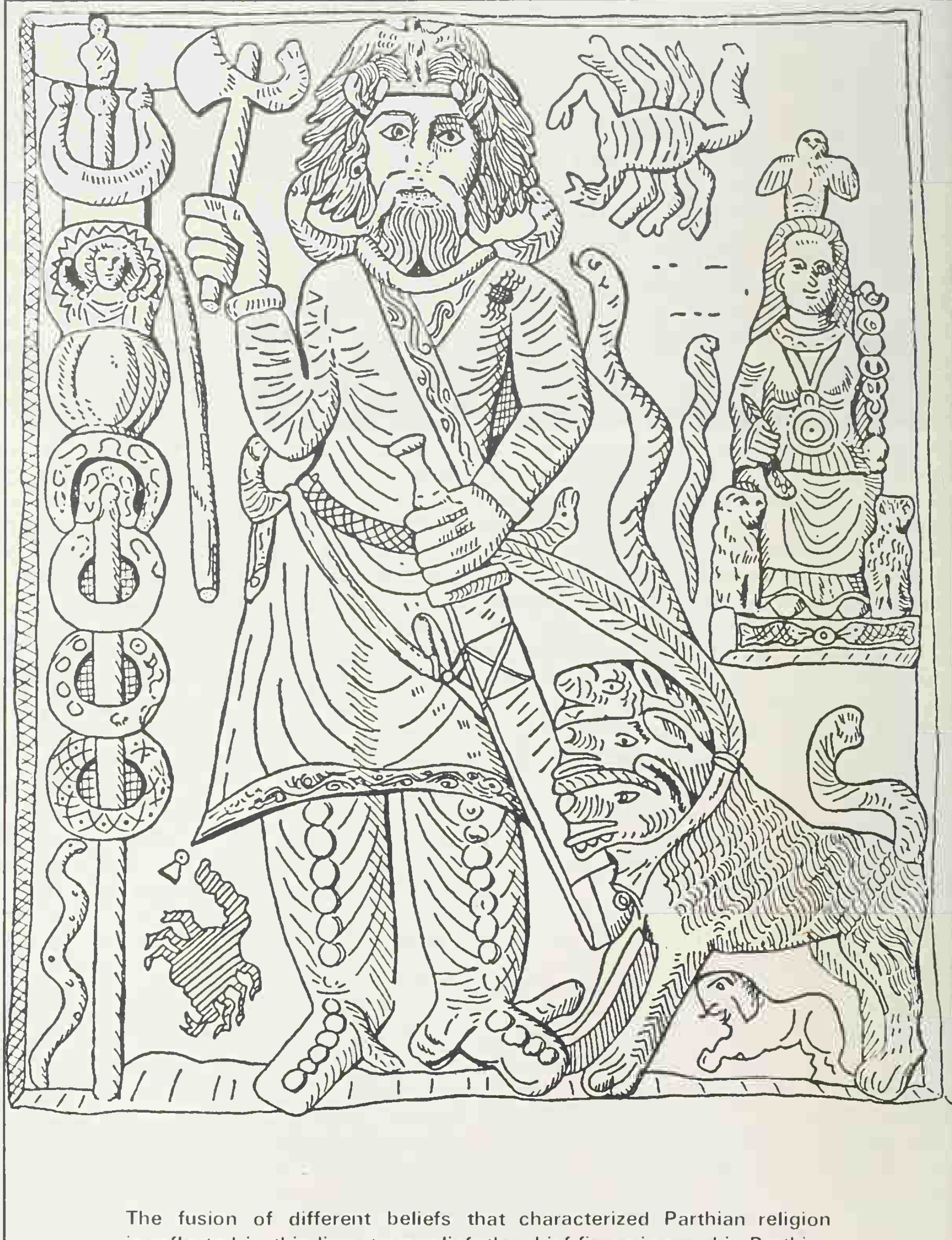
The expression 'a Parthian shot', meaning a remark which is made with deadly effect at the moment of departure, derives from a tactic used by the Parthian mounted archers; the Parthian Empire achieved an extraordinary fusion of religious beliefs drawn from Iranian, Semitic and Greek traditions

PARTHIANS

THE CRUSHING DEFEAT inflicted by the Parthians on the Roman army at Carrhae in 53 BC alerted the Roman Republic to the powerful enemy on the eastern frontier of their Empire. The mounted archers, with their 'Parthian shots', now became familiar figures in Western literature. In 40 BC the Parthians actually invaded the Roman provinces of Asia Minor and Syria, capturing Jerusalem among other places. Though forced to withdraw, for another two centuries they remained a constant threat to Rome's empire in the east.

The Parthians, although they established an empire that extended from the frontiers of Syria in the west to those of Bactria (northern Afghanistan) in the east, are a little-known people. This obscurity seems to have resulted largely from the policy of the Sassanians who, having overthrown the Parthians in c 227 AD, were concerned to damn or obliterate their memory. Modern research is gradually recovering information about the Parthians and their achievement in the synthesizing and dissemination of Eastern and Western cultural traditions, particularly in the matter of religion.

Originally a tribe of Iranian nomads known as the Parni, the Parthians acquired the latter designation with Greek and Roman writers by seizing the satrapy (district) of Parthava in c 247 BC. Their leader, named Arsaces, founded a dynasty of kings known as the Arsacids. Their new kingdom was wrested from the Seleucid government, which had inherited the Middle Eastern part of the empire of Alexander the Great. The Seleucid rulers continued Alexander's policy of Hellenizing the peoples he had conquered. This policy meant the establishment of Greek political and cultural institutions, including religious cults.



The fusion of different beliefs that characterized Parthian religion is reflected in this limestone relief; the chief figure is a god in Parthian dress holding an axe, a typical attribute of Semitic and Hittite weather gods. The three-headed dog on his left is reminiscent of Cerberus, guardian of the Greek underworld

A very important question concerning the Parthian attitude towards the many religions current in their empire is that of their policy towards Zoroastrianism. This native Iranian religion, which was to be vigorously supported by the Sassanians, had existed in Iran since the 6th century BC. It seems to have been accepted in a modified form by the Achaemenian rulers, whose imperial dynasty was overthrown by Alexander the Great. The defeat of this native dynasty and the Hellenizing policy of Alexander and the Seleucids seem likely to have imperilled Zoroastrianism, or at least hindered its progress. The rise to power, therefore, of an Iranian dynasty, such as the Parthian Arsacids, would appear to have been providential for Zoroastrianism.

The issue, unfortunately, remains obscure, for the original native religion of the Parthians is unknown, and the position of Zoroastrianism at this time is uncertain. There is a tradition that a Parthian king, Valakhsh or Vologases, collected together fragments of the 21 books attributed to Zoroaster, which had survived Alexander's destruction of the Iranian prophet's works. However that may be what evidence there is seems to indicate that the Parthians inherited and maintained what has been called 'a general Mazdayasnian religious predominance'.

This means, in fact, that they continued the religious situation that existed under the Achaemenians. For under these rulers, while Zoroaster's Ahura Mazdah (see OHRMAZD) was worshipped and Arta, the principle of cosmic good order, was exalted, the Iranian deities Mithra and Anahita were also acknowledged, contrary to the teaching of Zoroaster, and the Magi, the ancient Persian priestly caste, extended their influence. The Parthians were Mazdah worshippers and respected the Magi; several of their monarchs incorporated references to Arta and Mithra in their names. They were also fire worshippers and a royal fire burned continually before each Arsacid king.

In contrast to the Magian custom of exposing the bodies of the deceased on 'towers of silence' (see PARSEES), the established Parthian means of disposing of the dead was by burial. The bodies were usually placed in terracotta coffins, curiously shaped and somewhat resembling 'bath-tubs' or 'slippers', which has caused them to be so designated by modern archeologists. These clay coffins were often decorated with the figure of a soldier or a nude goddess, who is probably to be identified with Anahita. Funerary equipment of various kinds, including utensils, weapons, jewellery and figurines, were placed in the graves, possibly for the post-mortem needs of the deceased.

The Parthians evolved a remarkable kind of mortuary architecture. Tombs took the form of brick or stone rectangular buildings, within which were vaulted chambers containing series of *loculi*, narrow recesses that housed the sarcophagi. At Dura and Palmyra these multiple tombs were often built as towers, containing several storeys: the Palmyrenes called them 'houses of eternity'. The loculi were generally closed with a sculptured bust of the deceased.

Silver dish, 2nd century AD, showing Dionysus with Ariadne and Hercules: the combination of Greek subject and style with central Asian motifs such as the chariot wheel in the form of a solar disc, is an example of the different cultural elements in Parthian art

British Museum/C M Dixon

The syncretism that characterized the religion of Parthia is strikingly presented in its iconography. An impressive memorial to this is the colossal tomb of Antiochus I of Commagene (69–34 BC). As the inscriptions on the giant statues show, the following identifications of Greek and Iranian gods were made: Zeus-Oromasdes (Ohrmazd, the later designation of Ahura Mazdah); Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes; Artagnes (Verethragna, god of war)-Heracles-Ares.

Meeting Place of Many Faiths

The most amazing of all instances of Parthian religious syncretism, however, is a carved slab from Hatrah. It shows as its chief figure a bearded male deity in Parthian dress, armed with a heavy sword. Serpents entwine his body and neck, and a small eagle or falcon with outstretched wings surmounts his head. In his right hand he holds an axe, which was a typical attribute of Semitic and Hittite weather gods. To his right is the standard of Hatrah, bearing various symbols including the lunar crescent and the head of the sun god. To the left of the god is a three-headed dog, reminiscent of Cerberus who guarded the Greek underworld. Above, to the right, a small enthroned figure of a goddess, probably Atargatis, is shown, with accompanying bird, lion and fish symbols.

No inscription identifies the main figure. The axe and the three-headed dog associate him respectively with the sky and the underworld; the eagle might also signify celestial attributes. The figure seems to be a Parthian version of the lion-headed monster, whose image has been found in many Mithraic sanctuaries. The serpents and scorpions, in this context, would represent signs of the zodiac. This Mithraic figure was identified with Zurvan-Ahriman, a sinister Iranian deity personifying the destructive aspect of Time (see TIME; ZURVAN).

Besides such evidence of the syncretizing of Iranian, Semitic and Greek religious traditions in Parthia, there are also indications of even wider tolerance of foreign faiths. In eastern Parthia there were sympathetic contacts with Buddhism and Hindu cults, while in the western parts Jewish communities flourished, which were permitted to proselytize. Christianity also was established early in Parthian lands, and there are even legendary letters from Christ to Abgar V, ruler of Edessa.

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Life is a journey, the soul treads a 'way' to heaven which is both a route and a method, the strait and narrow path is the one which leads to salvation, and the dead travel the dangerous roads of the afterworld

PATH SYMBOLISM

HAPPY IS THE MAN who finds wisdom, says the book of Proverbs (chapter 3) for 'her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace'. The path or road or way is a frequently used symbol, appearing in several well-worn English phrases. There is 'the path of duty', for instance, or 'the primrose path of dalliance' which Shakespeare contrasts in *Hamlet* with 'the steep and thorny way to heaven'. Someone who is ill may be 'on the road to recovery', someone who has died has 'gone the way of all flesh'. You can 'fall by the-wayside', be 'led up the garden path' or be 'on the right track'.

The image of 'the open road', running freely on across hill and dale, representing adventure, release, and freedom from the cramped confines of conventional society, appealed particularly to writers in the later 19th and 20th centuries. The hero of H. G. Wells's novel *The History of Mr Polly* escapes from the cage of his job and his marriage, and takes to the open road. In *The Wind in the Willows*, by Kenneth Grahame, the Toad expands on the theme when he shows his new caravan to Rat and Mole. 'There's real life for you, embodied in that little cart. The open road, the dusty highway, the heath, the common, the hedgerows, the rolling downs! Camps, villages, towns, cities! Here to-day, up and off somewhere else to-morrow! Travel, change, interest, excitement! The whole world before you, and a horizon that's always changing!'

The course of human life is often pictured as a journey, as in Christina Rossetti's poem *Up-Hill*:

> Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
> Yes, to the very end.
> Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
> From morn to night, my friend.

The journey is usually a spiritual one, a pilgrimage, a quest for the soul's salvation, as in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, where Christian gains heaven, the Celestial City, after an arduous journey through a symbolic landscape in which it is dangerous to stray off the path or take the wrong turning. In the journey of the spirit the difficult road is the right one to take: 'For the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction... the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life' (Matthew, chapter 7). The same sentiment occurs in the famous tag from Virgil, *facilis descensus Averno*, 'easy is the descent to hell'.

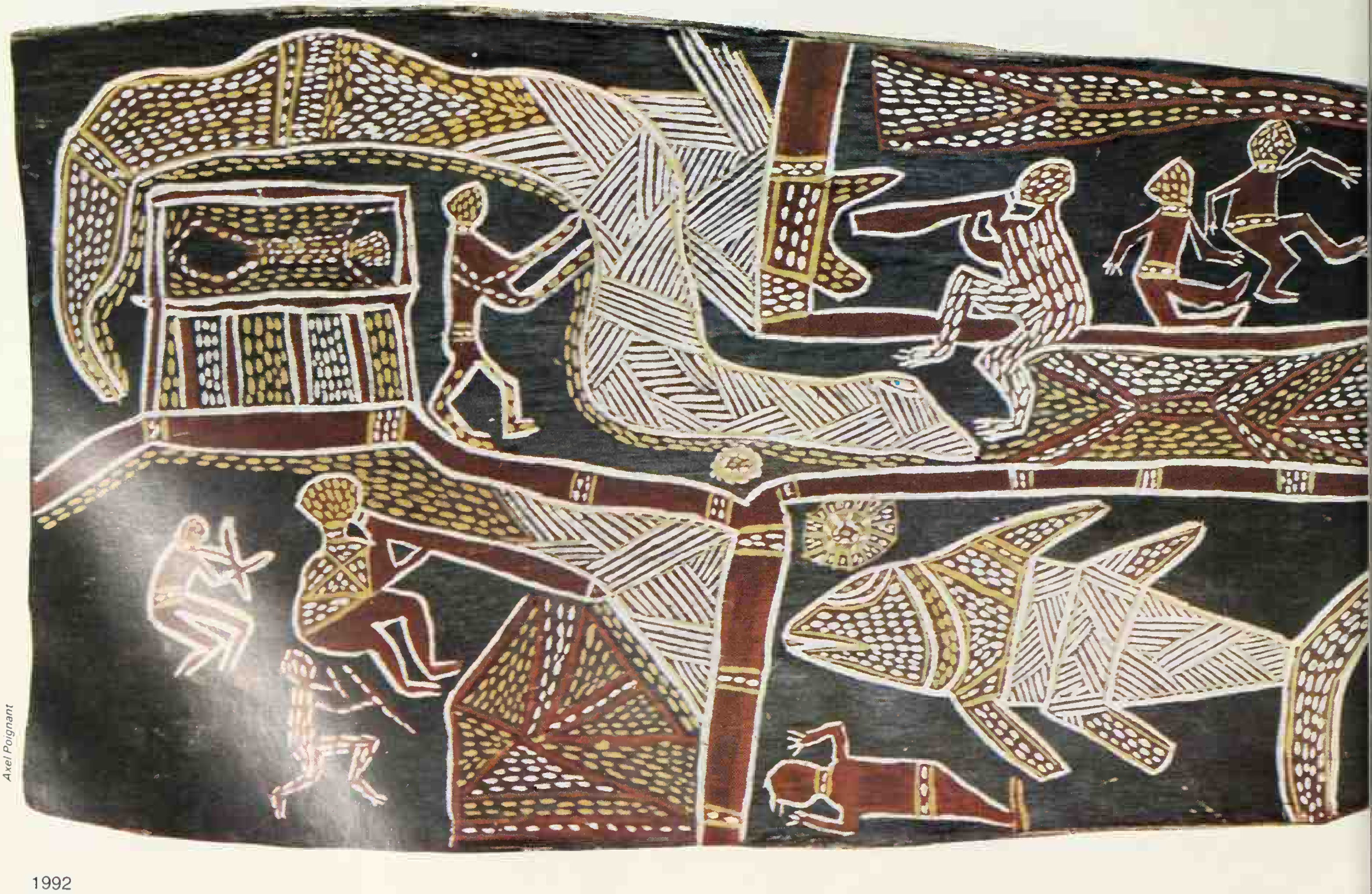
Psalm 23 is probably the best-known example of journey symbolism in the Old Testament: 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want... he leads me beside still waters... he leads me in the paths of righteousness... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil.'

The word 'way' means both a road and a method. Jesus said, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me' (John, chapter 14), and the Christian way to heaven is to 'follow Christ', with a double imagery of both treading in his footsteps and accepting his message. In the Middle Ages the monastic life was sometimes called the *via regia* or 'royal road', the highway to salvation of constant contemplation of God, the spiritual road which runs straight and true, on which there are no detours.

The Paths of the Dead

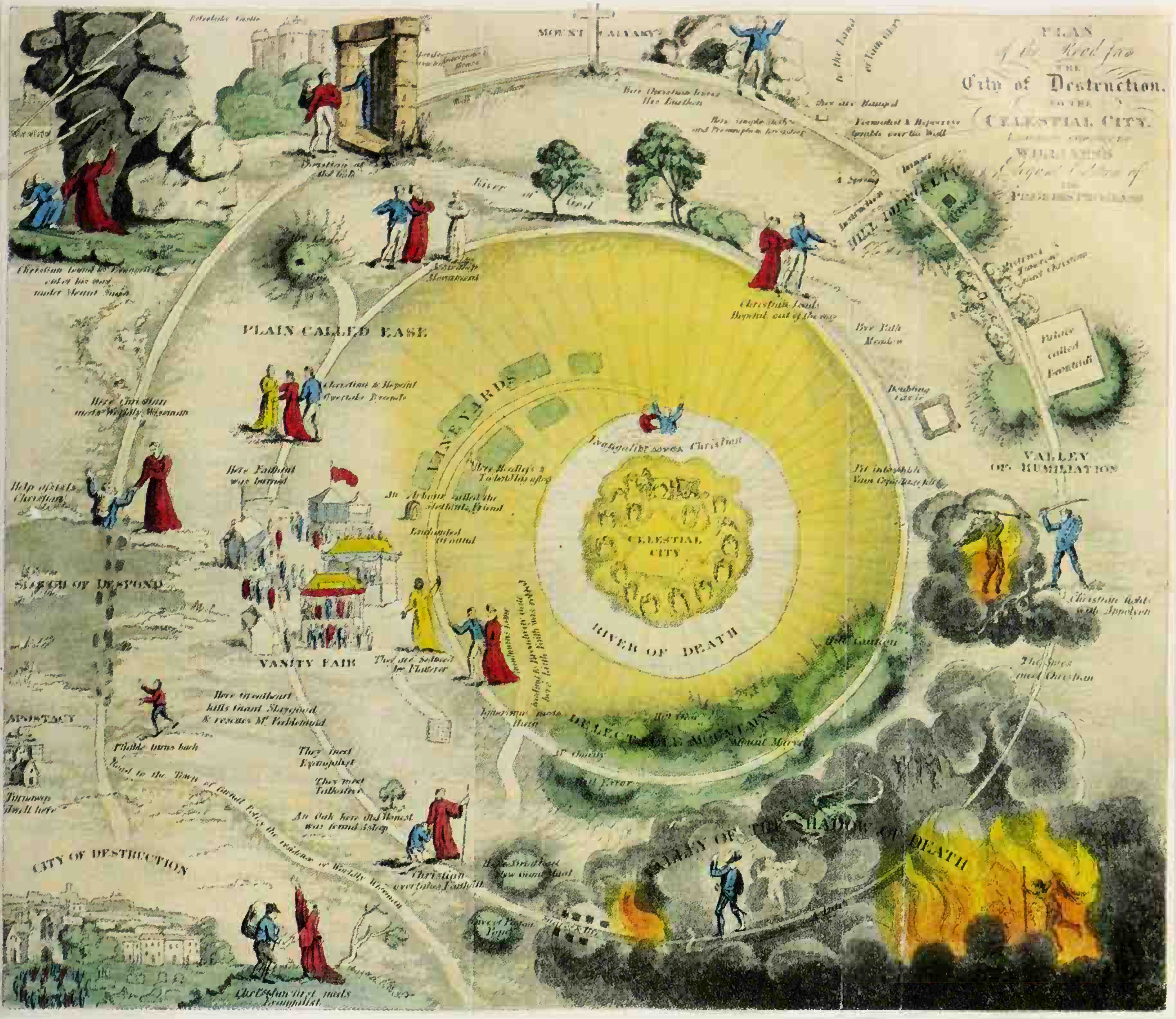
The double meaning of 'way' as both a route and a method is not confined to western ways of thinking. In India the word *marga* means both a path and a means of reaching a goal. There are many different paths to salvation, suited to people in different stages of spiritual development. *Karma-marga*, for instance, is the path of doing good works, *bhakti-marga* is the method of love and devotion to the divine, *kriya-marga* is the way of ritual, of building temples and making images of the gods. Similarly, *yana* in Mahayana (great course) and Hinayana (lesser course) basically means 'path'.

The Milky Way owes its name to the old belief that it is a track in the heavens



Aboriginal bark painting from Australia, showing the path to be taken by the soul on its journey to the otherworld; the idea that after death the spirit must follow difficult and dangerous paths is very widespread

Axel Poignant


PLAN of the Road from the City of Destruction to the CELESTIAL CITY
MOUNT CALVARY
HILL DIFFICULTY
PLAIN CALLED EASE
VINEYARDS
CELESTIAL CITY
RIVER OF DEATH
VALLEY OF HUMILIATION
SLOUGH OF DESPOND
VANITY FAIR
APOSTACY
DELECTABLE MOUNTAINS
VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH
CITY OF DESTRUCTION
Evangelist meets Christian
Palace called Beautiful
Christian fights with Apollyon

Mansell Collection

Map illustrating the stages of the spiritual journey described in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, where Christian eventually reaches heaven, the Celestial City, after an arduous journey through a symbolic landscape

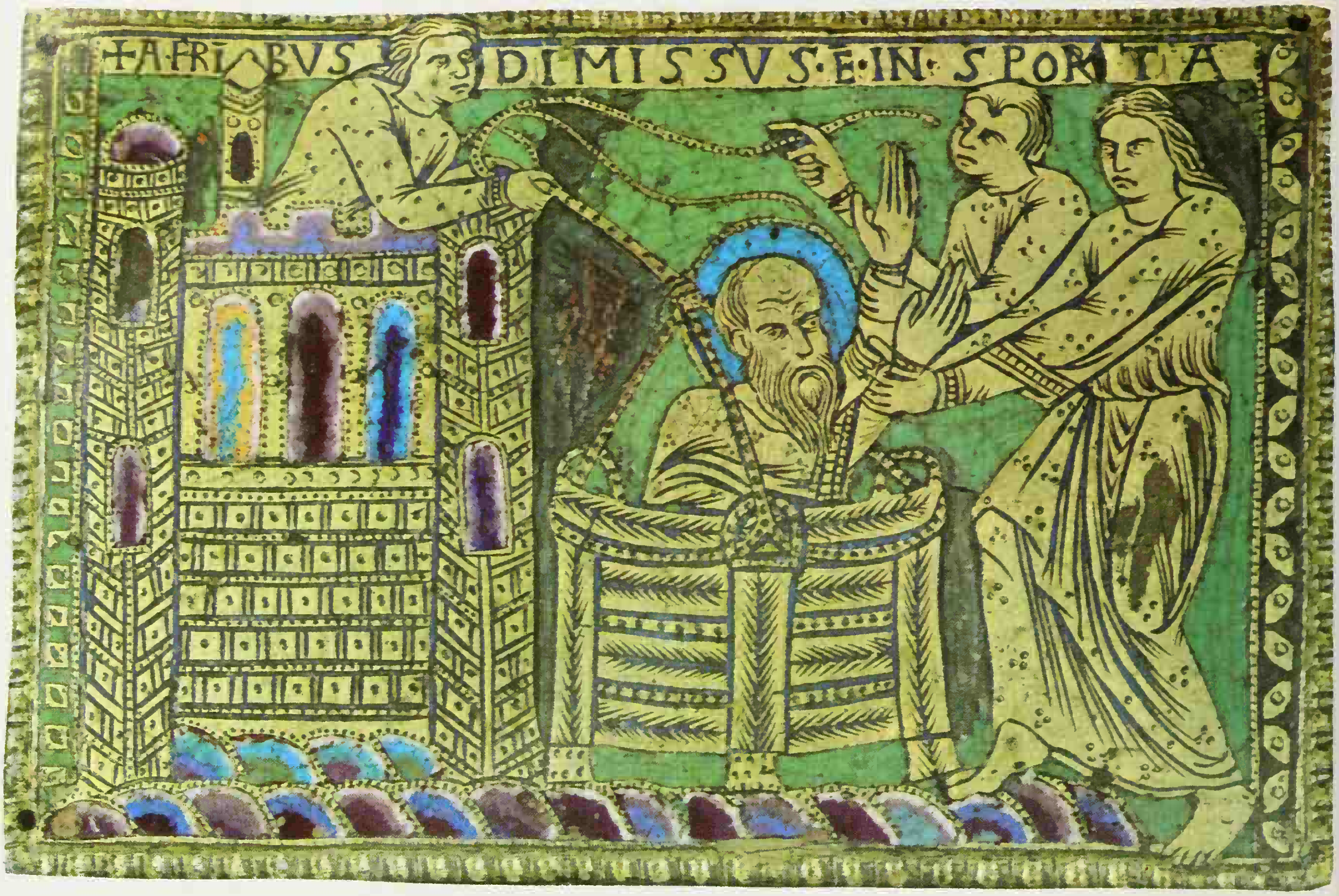
(though alternatively it was often thought of as a river), frequently regarded as the road along which the dead travel to the otherworld. That in the afterlife there are paths which the departed must tread is a widespread idea. For example, the Guarayo Indians of Bolivia said that after death the soul has the choice of two paths. One is broad and easy, the other narrow and difficult, and it is this second path which the soul should choose. It leads to a river, across which the soul must be ferried by a huge alligator, and to a second river, crossed on a tree trunk. Later the soul must negotiate a dark land by the light of a burning straw, it must pass between the clashing rocks which can be mastered only by a password, and eventually, if it survives all the perils of the journey, it will come to a lane of flowering trees and hear birds singing and live happily for all eternity.

On the other side of the world, in ancient Egypt, some coffins of c 2000 BC portray a map of the journey which the dead had to make by one of two routes, one by land and the other by water, to the mysterious country of Ro-Setau (see BOOK OF THE DEAD). In India, there is a Hindu theory that after death the soul of a man who is totally sinless rises along the *deva-yana*, 'god-path', through fire to day, from day to the lighted side of the moon, from there to the part of the year lighted up by the sun in its northward journey, and then by way of the year, the sun, the moon and lightning to paradise. A soul which is not entirely without sin but is still exceptionally virtuous takes the *pitri-yana* or 'father's path' through the moon, the atmosphere, wind, clouds and rain to a lesser paradise, from which it will eventually be reborn as a person of high rank.

The paths which the soul must take after death have a parallel in the symbolic travels of the candidate for initiation, who experiences a 'death and rebirth'. 'At first one wanders and wearily hurries to and fro, and journeys with suspicion through the dark...' (see INITIATION).

The Twenty-Two Paths

There are also paths in the astral otherworld of modern western occultism, 22 of them, corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the 22 major trumps of the Tarot pack (see ALPHABET; TAROT). These paths are shown as lines running from one sefirah to another on the diagram of the cabalistic Tree of Life (see CABALA). Since the Tree represents the emanations from the divine being which created the universe, the paths leading down from the sefirah Kether at the top of the diagram are stages in the process through which the universe came into being. Conversely, if the paths are trodden in the reverse order, starting from the sefirah Malkhuth and climbing upwards, they are the way of the soul's ascent to the divine and the steps of the magician's quest for power.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ST PAUL

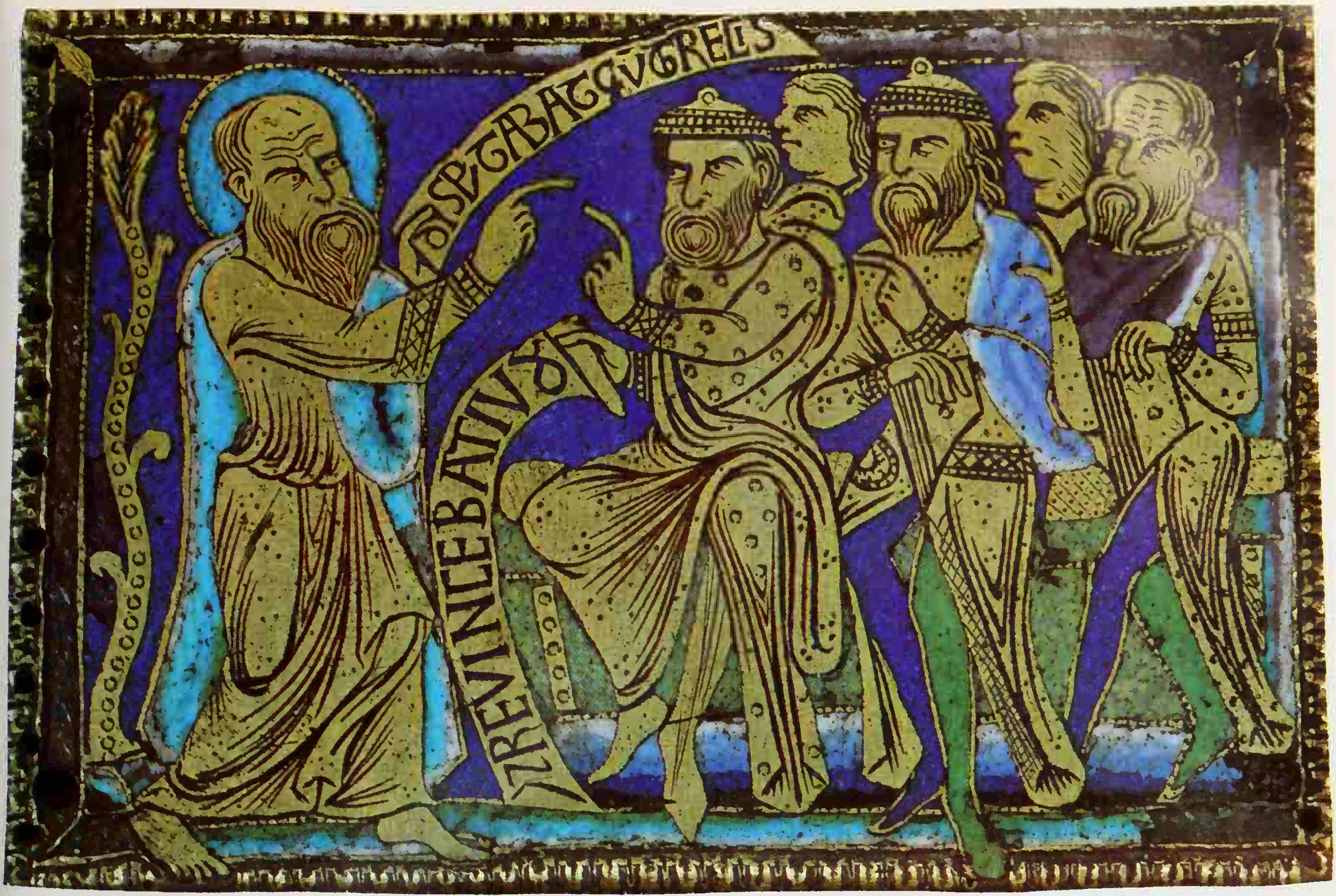
The Pilot of Christianity

Seeking to present a gospel acceptable to Graeco-Roman society, the great missionary figure of early Christianity transformed the original belief in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel into an esoteric doctrine of a divine saviour

DURING THE PAST CENTURY St Paul has been transformed from the most important apostle to the most controversial figure of Primitive Christianity. There is a certain irony in this situation; for Paul, despite his high reputation in the Church, was originally a controversial figure and his authority as an apostle was seriously questioned by other Christians of the time. It is the paradox of this original uncertainty about Paul's status and his subsequent great renown that has caused scholars to look critically at the traditional view of the beginnings of the Christian religion.

In seeking to understand Paul and the part he played in the infant Christian movement, it is necessary first to evaluate our sources of information. The primary source is Paul's own writings. Of those attributed to him in the New Testament expert opinion is generally agreed in recognizing the following as genuine: the epistle to the Romans, the two epistles to the Corinthians, those to the Galatians, Philippians and Colossians, the first epistle to the Thessalonians and the little personal note addressed to Philemon. They were written in Greek during a period from about 48 to 60 AD. Since these writings take the form of letters and are often concerned with specific issues that had arisen in the communities to which they were addressed, they have a spontaneous character. In them Paul often throws out ideas on matters of belief and practice which he does not follow up. Many of these ideas are pregnant with theological suggestion; but sometimes, when set together, they appear to be mutually contradictory. However, it must be remembered that when Paul wrote, some 20 years only had passed since the crucifixion of Jesus, and as yet there was no Christian theology. Paul was, in fact, unconsciously laying the foundations upon which the theologians of the Church were later to build the great doctrines of the faith.

The other source is the Acts of the Apostles, which was written towards the end of the 1st century AD. It seeks to show how



Victoria and Albert Museum

Two 12th century plaques showing episodes from St Paul's adventurous career: he escapes by night from Damascus, let down from the city walls in a basket *(left)*, and he disputes with Greeks and Jews *(above)*. A Jew by birth, Paul's first language was Greek, and he believed himself divinely chosen to preach Christ to the Gentiles: in doing so, he produced a version of Christianity which shocked the original Jewish Christians of Jerusalem

Christianity, guided by the Spirit, started from the small community of original disciples resident in Jerusalem, and spread throughout the Roman Empire until it was preached by Paul in Rome itself. The author of Acts was concerned to idealize the past, and he ignores or is evasive about the conflicts in which Paul was involved. His picture of the progress of Christianity has two phases: the first and shorter is the initial Jerusalem phase, of which St Peter is the leading figure; the scene of the second lies outside Palestine and has Paul as its hero. On a number of points the account of Paul in Acts differs from the evidence of Paul's own writings, of which it makes no apparent use. The most serious difference concerns Paul's initial contacts with Christianity.

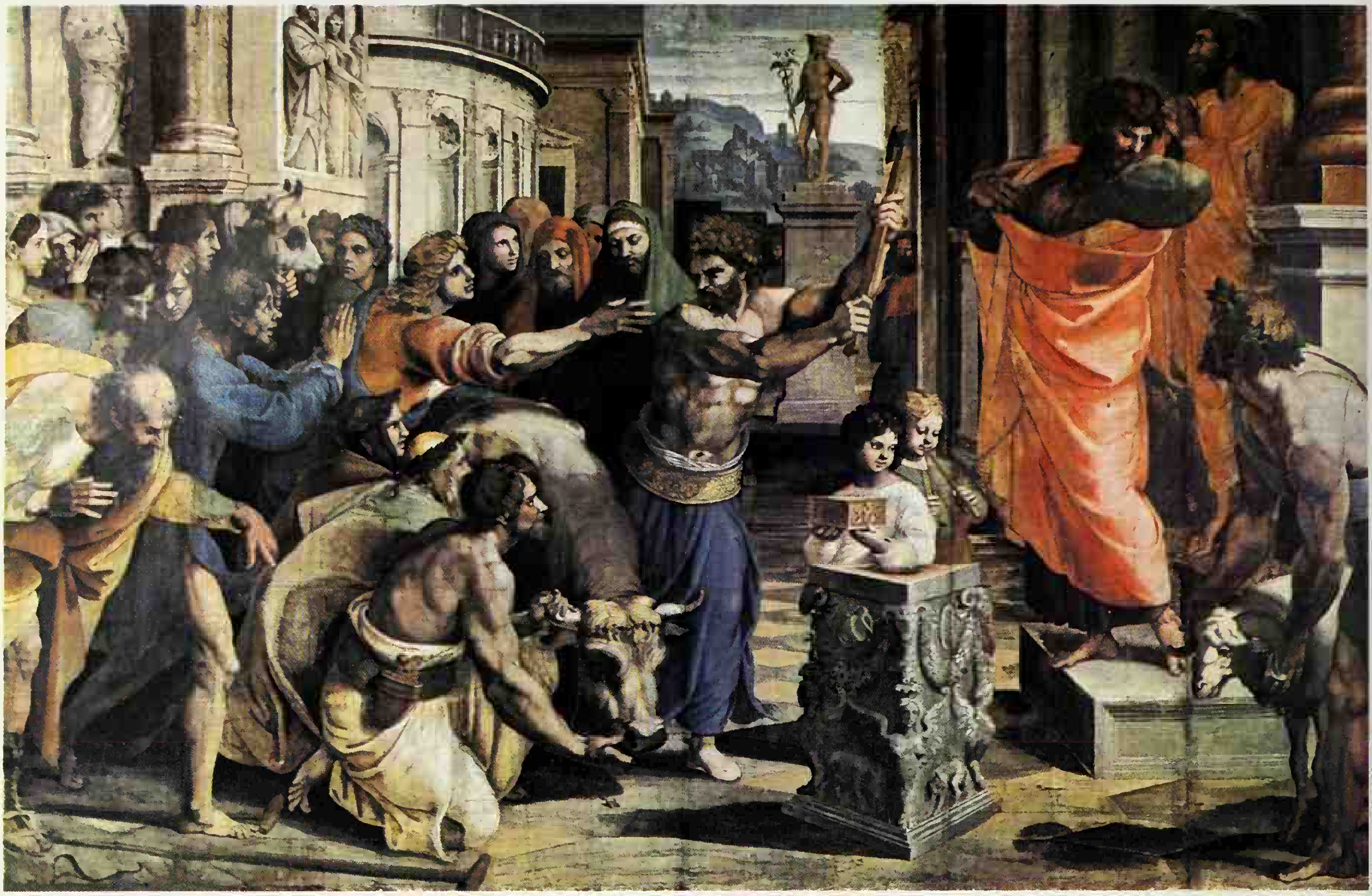
According to Acts, Paul took a leading part in the persecution of the Christians of Judaea and Samaria following the martyrdom of Stephen (8. 1–3). Not content with venting his animosity against these members of the new movement, he obtained authority from the high priest to arrest Jewish Christians living in Damascus. But on the road to the Syrian city he experienced a devastating vision of Jesus which left him blind. Brought to Damascus, his sight was restored by a Christian named Ananias, and he embraced the Christian faith and was baptized. Returning to Jerusalem he was accepted, after some hesitation, by the Christians there and boldly preached the faith that he had previously persecuted. When the Jews tried to kill him, the Jerusalem Christians sent him to Tarsus in Cilicia, which was his native city – Paul was in fact a Jew of the Diaspora (scattering of the Jews) whose first language was Greek.

In his epistle to the Christians of Galatia, Paul gives a very different account of his conversion. The context in which he gave it is highly significant. He was writing with great urgency and concern to those in Galatia whom he had converted to Christianity, because he had learned that they were being won over to a different form of Christianity – Paul calls it 'a different gospel' – which was contrary to the one that he had preached to them. Since this other 'gospel' constituted a challenge to the authenticity of his own 'gospel', Paul felt obliged to explain the source of his, in order to vindicate its authority.

He asserts that his gospel or version of Christianity had no human source: 'For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ' (Galatians 1.12). This assertion leads Paul on to explain how he had been converted and entrusted with his mission – and in doing so he emphasizes, significantly, his absolute independence of the original apostles at Jerusalem:

> For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea; they only heard it said, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy" (1. 13–23).

This account of Paul's conversion contradicts that of Acts, and Paul's own statement must naturally be preferred. However, the true importance of the passage resides in Paul's interpretation of his conversion. For he declares that it was due to the direct intervention of God, for the specific purpose of revealing 'his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles'.



The people of Lystra in Asia Minor identified Barnabas with Zeus and Paul with Hermes, and attempted to offer sacrifice to the horrified apostles: cartoon by Raphael

A little further on in the same epistle (2.7-8), Paul makes a similar claim, but this time referring to the teaching of another Christian leader. He says that he 'had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised', while 'Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised'.

A Gospel for the Gentiles

These two passages show that Paul recognized that his version of Christianity was different from that of Jesus's leading disciple Peter. This difference lay in the fact that his version was designed for non-Jews, whereas Peter's was for the Jews. The implications of this distinction are very great. For Peter's gospel was obviously the original version of the Christian faith, yet it was regarded by Paul as not suitable for Gentiles. His own gospel, which he admits was later and wholly independent of 'those who were apostles before me', he claims, by way of contrast, to be of divine origin and specifically intended for Gentiles.

In other words, Paul reveals in this letter that already, within two decades of the Crucifixion, two interpretations of Jesus were current in the Church. The first was associated with Peter, and was doubtless based upon that disciple's memories of Jesus and his teaching. The other derived from Paul's own spiritual experience, which he believed constituted a personal revelation to him by God.

An evaluation of the differences between these two versions of Jesus is essential to the understanding of the origins of Christianity. Unfortunately it is made exceedingly difficult both by the obliteration of the original Christian community and its records in the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD, and by the nature of Paul's own writings. However, by a careful analysis of what evidence has survived it is possible to reconstruct the main outlines of both interpretations.

The original disciples recognized Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. They believed that he would shortly return with supernatural power to earth to complete his Messianic task, which had been strangely interrupted by his martyr's death at the hands of the Romans. These disciples did not regard their faith in Jesus as constituting a new religion apart from Judaism, and they continued to live as zealous orthodox Jews. Although they exalted Jesus as the Messiah, they regarded him as human; for Judaism was strictly monotheistic and the Messiah was not held to be divine.

Gnostic View of Christ

Paul's version of Christianity diverged from the Jerusalem 'gospel' on two basic issues: the nature of Jesus and the meaning of his death. How different was Paul's conception is immediately evident in the following passage from his first epistle to the Corinthians (2.6-9):

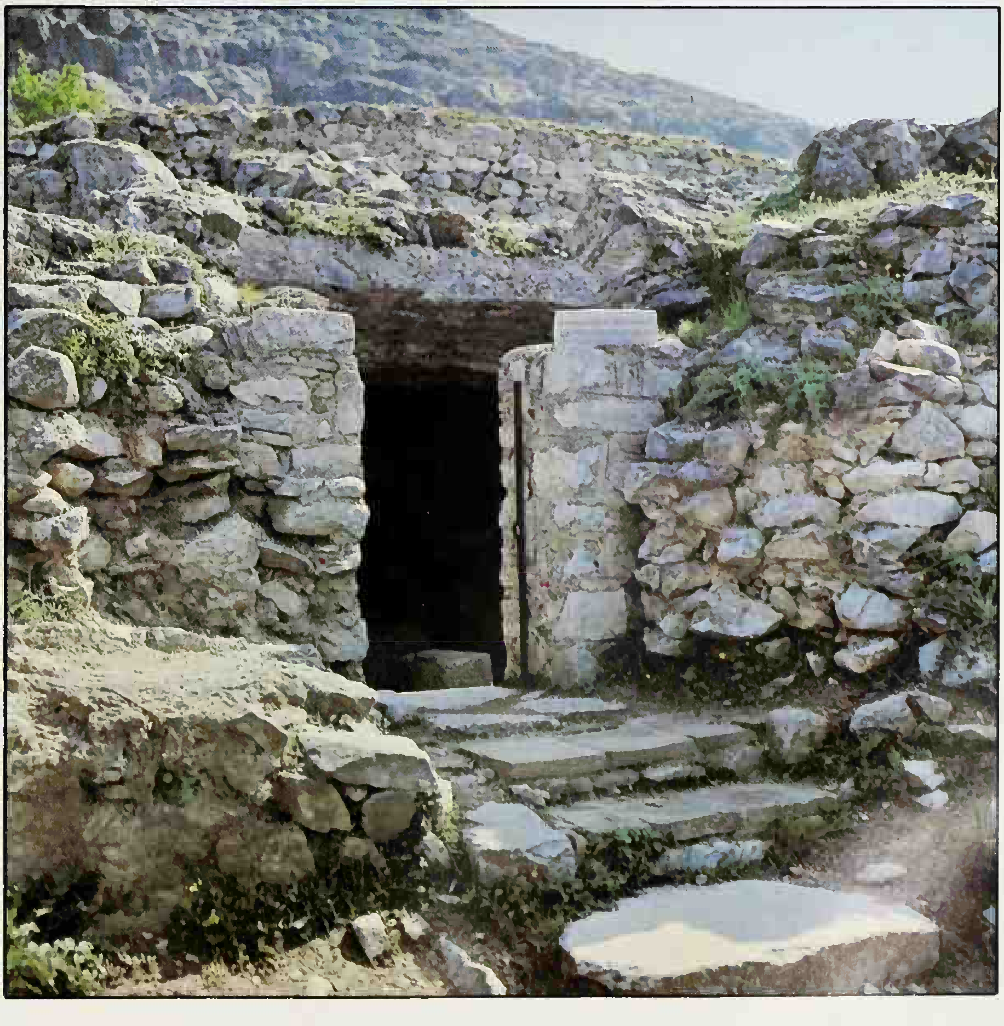
> Yet among the mature (*teleioi*) we do impart wisdom (*sophia*), although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age (*archontes tou aionos*), who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages (*aiones*) for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory (*ho Kyrios tes doxes*).

On analysis, this passage, which contains Paul's most explicit statement about the purpose of the Crucifixion, reveals an amazing complex of esoteric and non-Judaic ideas. First, it is significant that Paul uses the Greek word *teleioi*, 'mature' or 'perfect', because it was a term current in the pagan Mystery religions for those fully initiated. The expression *archontes tou aiones* implies that Paul was thinking in terms of astral Gnosticism, a system of religio-philosophical thought current in Graeco-Roman society (see GNOSTICISM). It presupposed that the lives and destinies of mankind in this world were ruled by spiritual beings (*archontes*), who inhabited the planets. Above them were others, rising to the zenith where dwelt the 'Supreme Mind' or 'Father of Light'.

The human situation envisaged by Paul was clearly of this kind. He imagines that before a series of world-ages (*aiones*), of which the present is the last, God planned to save mankind from their subjection to the archontes. The plan was to deceive the archontes by sending into the world a pre-existent divine being, designated the 'Lord of Glory', who was incarnated in the person

Right The ruins of Salamis in Cyprus: Paul preached here at the outset of his missionary campaign _Below_ The reputed prison of Paul at Philippi in Macedonia, from which he was released by 'a great earthquake'

Sona Halliday Photographs/F. H. C. Birch



Sona Halliday Photographs/F. H. C. Birch

of Jesus of Nazareth. Not recognizing his true nature, the archontes crucified Jesus, and thereby forfeited their hold over mankind. The implications of Paul's brief statements were worked out by later Christian theologians into what became the classic form of the doctrine of salvation.

Paul thus identified Jesus as the incarnation of the 'Lord of glory', and he interpreted his crucifixion as the climax of God's plan of salvation. He makes the archontes responsible for this crucifixion, without reference to the Roman and Jewish authorities who actually carried out the historical crucifixion. By so doing, Paul transformed the original belief in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel into an esoteric doctrine of a divine saviour, whose death had delivered mankind from their enslavement to the planetary powers. Such a presentation of Jesus was intelligible to Graeco-Roman society. And, in the same context, Paul taught a doctrine of baptism and holy communion that made Christianity structurally akin to the Mystery religions (see BAPTISM; MYSTERY RELIGIONS).

In thus interpreting Christianity Paul believed, as we have seen, that he was inspired by God for the salvation of the Gentiles, to whom the 'gospel to the circumcised' was both unintelligible and offensive. When, however, the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem realized the nature of Paul's teaching, they were shocked and vigorously repudiated it. They refused to recognize Paul as an apostle (he had never been an original disciple of Jesus), and they sent out emissaries to Paul's converts to present their own 'gospel' as the authentic faith.

Paul's position in this conflict was basically weak because he had to acknowledge the Jerusalem leaders as 'those who were apostles before him', whereas they could reject him as a late-comer to the faith. The situation became so difficult for Paul that finally he went to Jerusalem to try to secure some measure of agreement. The disastrous outcome is related in Acts (chapter 21). James, the leader of the Jerusalem Church, imposed on Paul a test of his Jewish orthodoxy. While engaged in proving this, he was set upon by a crowd in the Temple and rescued by the Roman guard. A period of trials and imprisonment followed, before Paul was sent to Rome to be tried by the Emperor. The outcome of the trial is unrecorded.

After his arrest, it seemed that Paul's version of Christianity was fated to disappear and that the Jerusalem Christian would keep the movement within the con- fines of Judaism. But the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 AD, which finally resulted in the overthrow of the Jewish nation and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, eliminated the Jerusalem Church, and the Gentile Christians re-established the faith on the basis of Paul's teaching. And so it became the foundation of orthodox Christianity.

S.G.F. BRANDON

PEACOCK

THE PEACOCK is native to southern Asia and beliefs about it are widespread in that region, especially in India where, since 1963, it has been recognized as the national bird. As far back as the *Rig-Veda*, the Hindu collection of sacred writings dated c 1200 BC, it was recorded that the steeds of the god Indra possessed hair like peacock's feathers. The peacock has an important place in Hinduism and the national epic, the *Ramayana*, relates that when the gods transformed themselves into animal forms in order to escape the demon Ravana, Indra, the god of thunder, rains and war, became a peacock. In recompense the bird was endowed with a thousand eyes in its feathers, the capacity to rejoice when the rains came and the power to kill snakes; obviously it had been observed that the bird attacks serpents, and displays and calls noisily at the beginning of the rainy season.

Various names signify that the peacock dances joyfully on seeing clouds or hearing thunder. The term for one of the 108 postures of the classical Hindu dance signifies 'sportive like the peacock'. A number of divinities are portrayed mounted on the bird – in India Brahma and his wife Sarasvati, in Indo-China the warrior god Skanda and in Japan Kujaku-myoo (Mahamayuri), who protects from calamity and is besought to send rain.

The association of the peacock with rain also spread throughout Europe, where as far west as Ireland its calls are believed to forecast rain. The 15th century *Hortus Sanitatis* declares that it is a sign of rain when the peacock 'mounts on high' and Michael Drayton (1563–1631) wrote of 'the strutting peacock yawling 'gainst the rain'.

Protective Powers

From the knowledge that the peacock kills snakes there developed in India the belief that its bile and blood acted as an antidote against poison; smoke from its burning plumes was held to dispel venom and, in the Punjab, those bitten by snakes smoked its feathers. Travellers were recommended to carry a peacock to ward off snakes. In England during the 15th century the Eastern notion of the antipathy between the peacock and snakes became elaborated into the assumption that the bird's raucous call frightens away serpents and all venomous creatures.

Besides providing antidotes to poison, various parts of the bird were regarded as effective in curing many diseases and disabilities ranging from tuberculosis, forms of paralysis, asthma, catarrh and headaches to barrenness. Among Hindus and Moslems peacock feathers are believed to ward off evil, especially evil spirits. Umbrellas of the plumes were carried by persons associated with royalty and one is still held over the pope on important occasions. In India the mere sight of the bird is believed to bring good luck and to bestow peace of mind.

In Chinese and Japanese art the peacock has decorative and symbolical significance; it is often depicted together with the peony. A defeated Chinese general of the Chin dynasty who took refuge from his enemies in a forest is said to have been so grateful to the peacocks for not betraying him that he conferred peacock feathers on those showing special bravery in battle.

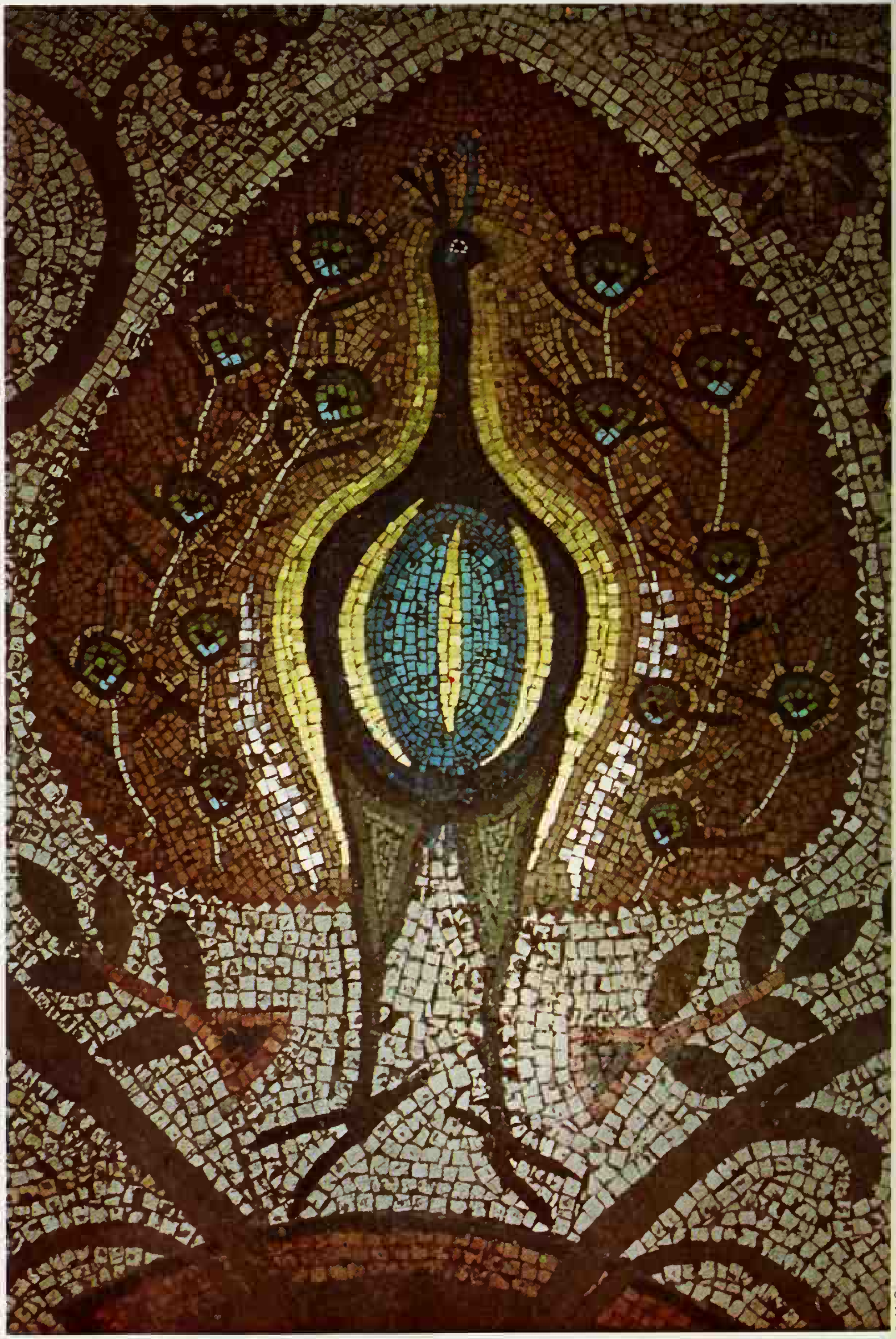
The Bird of Hera

The reference in the Old Testament to 'apes and peacocks' sent to Solomon (I Kings 10.22) cannot be taken seriously, as the translation is guesswork. However, peacocks are known to have been kept in Babylon. Aristotle mentions the peacock which, like the cock, was called 'the Persian bird', and a reference in a play by Aristophanes may imply that a Persian ambassador brought a gift of peacocks. Alexander the Great imposed heavy penalties on those who killed Indian peacocks.

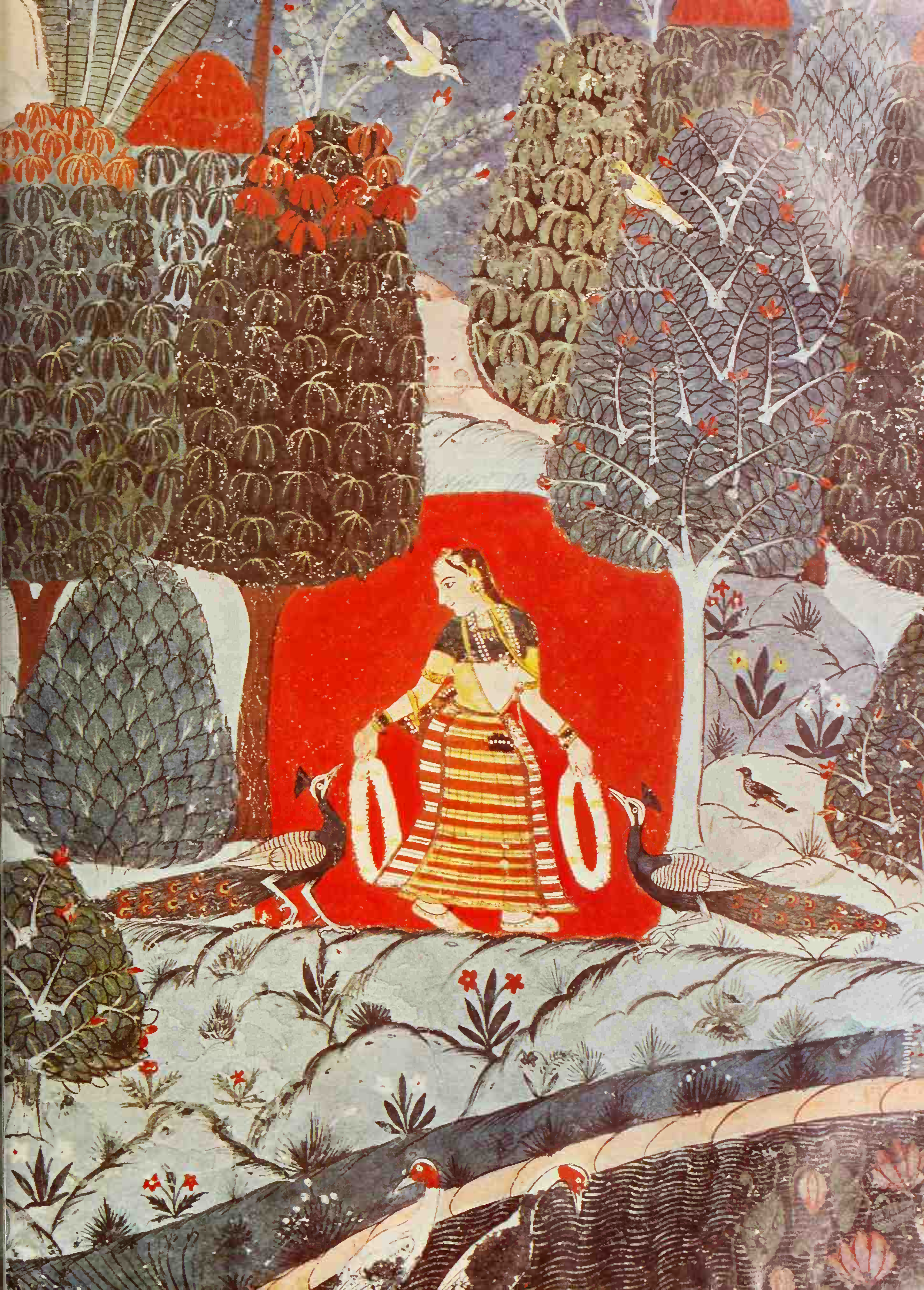
The birds were depicted on Greek coins. They were sacred to Hera, and a myth relates how the goddess set the hundred-eyed giant Argus to guard her husband's mistress, Io; when Zeus sent Hermes to charm and kill Argus, Hera used the giant's eyes to ornament the peacock's tail.

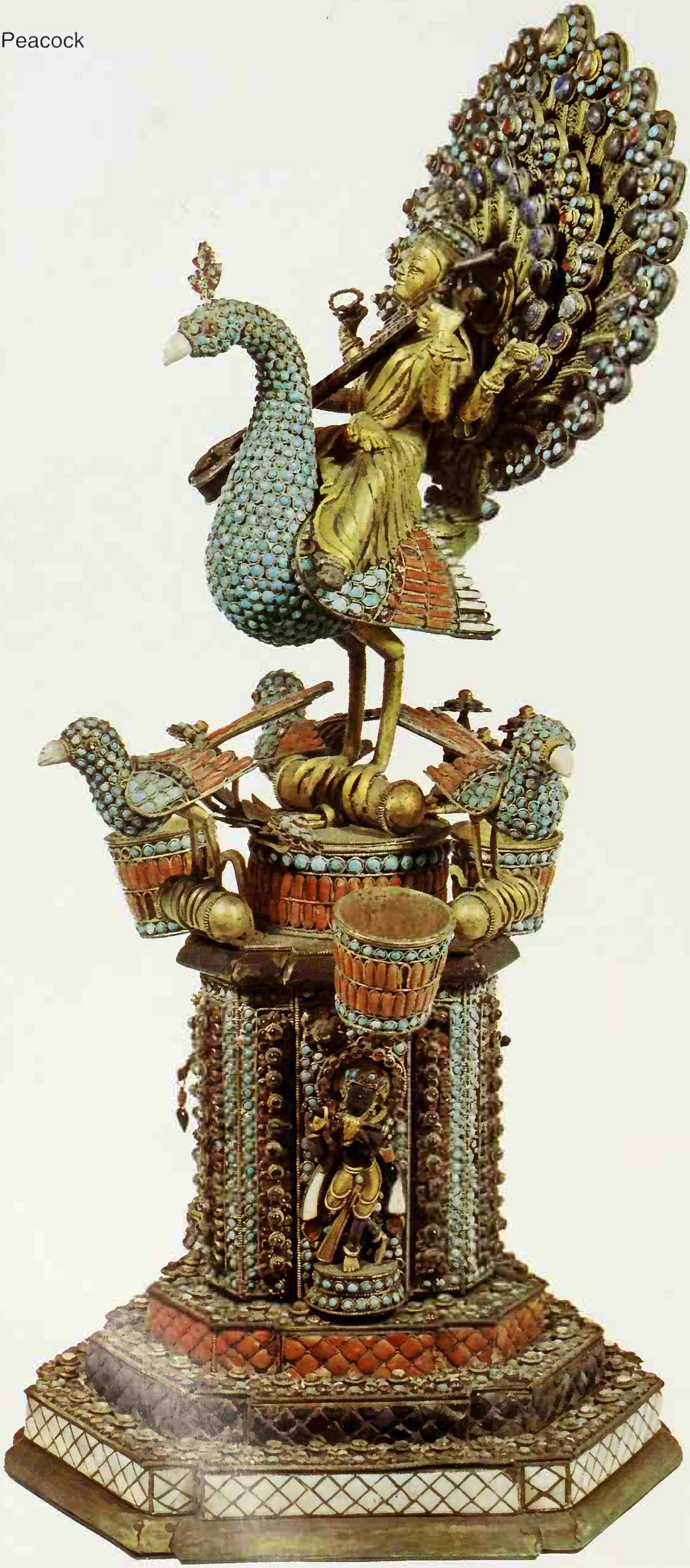
Although through its connection with

Roman mosaic of a peacock from Ravenna: originally the sacred bird of Juno, and of her Greek equivalent the goddess Hera, the peacock was taken over from pagan art to become a common Christian subject, being used as a symbol of the Resurrection



C. M. Dixon





Michael Holford/Abbey Museum

The bird into which Indra was transformed in order to escape the demon Ravana, the peacock has had an important place in Hinduism for more than three thousand years, and was declared India's national bird in 1963 *Left* Nepalese statue of Sarasvati, the wife of Brahma and goddess of music, speech and learning, seated upon a peacock, her traditional mount

rain, and hence fertility, the peacock was generally regarded as auspicious, there were exceptions to this view. In Java it was associated with the Devil and in Mosul in northern Iraq the Yezidis, who held that the Devil was not evil, called him the Peacock Angel. According to a Persian poet, the bird's 'hideous feet' remind it that it can never attain paradise. There is a somewhat similar anecdote in the *Physiologus*, which contains stories collected in Egypt in early Christian times. It states that the peacock, on seeing his feet and realizing how they contrast with his beautiful plumage, screams: so the Christian should avoid pride and lament his sins. In the medieval bestiaries this theme was elaborated: it was stated that as the peacock on awakening cries out because it has dreamed it has lost its beauty, so the Christian should fear lest he lose his virtues. These and other beliefs were included in Chester's *Love's Martyr*, where he mentions the admiration of Alexander the Great for the bird:

> The proud sun-bearing peacock with his feathers
> Walks all along, thinking himself a king,
> And with his voice prognosticates all weathers,
> Although God knows but badly he doth sing;
> But when he looks down to his base black feet,
> He droops and is ashamed of things unmeet.

The peacock was taken over from pagan into Christian art and appears very commonly in Christian iconography. It was early adopted as the symbol of the Resurrection, possibly because after moulting it was seen to become clothed again in splendour; there are examples in the Roman catacombs. St Augustine stated that its flesh was incorruptible. From this may have arisen the belief that peacock feathers preserved objects from decay if placed with them. In many medieval paintings angels' wings are composed of peacocks' plumes.

Thousands of animals and birds were said to have been slaughtered daily to supply the kitchens of Asoka, the great Indian emperor of the 3rd century BC, but he issued a decree that no more than two peacocks should be supplied – one of the earliest royal edicts in the interests of the conservation of wild life. In Latin literature there are many references to peacocks being included in the fare at banquets; they were bred on islands out of the reach of predators and the eggs were hatched under hens. Peacocks were also served at banquets in England and elsewhere in Europe. Indian medical works recommend the flesh as very wholesome but speak of it as astringent and saline; the present writer found it indistinguishable from chicken.

E. A. ARMSTRONG

PEARL

THE MYSTERIOUS 'SEED' of the oyster, the hidden treasure of the sea, the pearl is among the most beautiful and desirable of all Nature's creations. Throughout history pearls have been associated, by reason of their appearance, with the raindrop and the tear. In ancient China pearls were thought to be liquid globules expelled from the mouth of the sky dragon, the traditional rain god, and in the West they were believed to be the product of raindrops that had fallen from the sky into open oyster shells, where they became solidified.

Alternatively, pearls were said to be found in the foreheads, brains and stomachs of elephants, and the Hindus valued such discoveries very highly as amulets. The pearl has long been associated with royalty and in the ancient East monarchs were powdered with gold-dust and seed pearls at their coronations. In England, pearls encrusted the crowns of the early Anglo-Saxon kings.

Not until the Middle Ages did pearls find their way into Europe in large quantities, being brought home by the returning Crusaders as spoils of war. The wives of the nobility wore huge ropes of pearls and they were sewn onto the gowns of great ladies to form pretty patterns. In England the popularity of the pearl attained its highest peak in the Tudor period, when it adorned the gowns of nobleman and noblewoman alike. Elizabeth I is known to have expended the then enormous sum of £3000 upon pearls that had belonged to Mary Queen of Scots.

There is a long-standing belief that there exists an affinity between pearls and their wearers, the one reacting upon the other. It was once held, for example, that pearls would cloud if their owner fell sick, or would lose their lustre completely when he died. In the Orient there was a tradition that pearls lost a hundredth part of their lustre with every passing year.

In the past the pearl was believed to possess medicinal properties. Because it was 'hard like the heart' and existed in the heart of the oyster shell, it was recommended for heart disease, and it was administered to madmen in powdered form to clarify their minds. A solution of pearls dissolved in lemon juice was highly recommended for the treatment of epilepsy and hysteria. Pearls 'bruised and mixed with milk' were supposed to dissolve stomach ulcers, improve the quality of the voice and preserve chastity. Because it was supposed to possess properties that added lustre to the skin, powdered pearl was extremely popular among ladies in 16th century France.

Cleopatra drank a toast to Antony consisting of a dissolved pearl, which was more costly by far than the immense banquet she had provided in his honour; and Sir Thomas Gresham was inspired to toast his queen, Elizabeth I, in pearls at the City banquet after her visit to the Royal Exchange.

The pearl was known as the favourite jewel of Venus, and the ancient Roman would bedeck his hair with these gems to ensure success in love. Moslems believed that the faithful could look forward to an eternity of bliss in the arms of a beautiful houri, secreted within the heart of a pearl.

At the same time the pearl has religious associations. The concept of a precious gem enclosed within a rough outer shell made it an obvious emblem of the soul. Because of its purity it is also associated with Christ and the Virgin Mary, while heaven itself is guarded by pearly gates. A similar association of ideas can be seen in the concept of the pearl as symbolizing the mystic centre of the personality. The Third Eye of Buddha was a pearl and represented the highest essence of wisdom.

In terms of popular superstition the original idea of the pearl as a symbol of the tear has never been lost; as late as the end of the last century a widow's mourning ring was customarily set with pearls. In Europe, as in the far East, a gift of pearls continues to bring tears – although the curse does not apply if the pearls form part of an ancestral inheritance. In the symbolism of dreams, pearls mean disillusionment and sorrow, and to dream of a broken necklace portends a broken life and disintegration.

As a birthstone the pearl has far happier associations, for it not only endows the wearer with the power to cure fevers and overcome irritations but it also inspires love. It can be worn by practically everyone not born under the signs of Aries or Virgo, but because it governs the zodiacal house Cancer the pearl is the specific birthstone for those born in the month of June.

PECULIAR PEOPLE

THIS EVANGELICAL DENOMINATION derives its name from several texts in the Authorized Version of the Bible, notably from Peter 1 2.9: 'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.' In this older usage, 'peculiar' means 'special', not 'odd'; the New English Bible translates the phrase as 'a people claimed by God for his own'. Also sometimes known at first as the 'Plumstead Peculiars', the sect was founded in England in 1838 by William Bridges. Its teachings were spread, especially in Essex, by John Banyard.

The Peculiar People held – and, to a limited extent, still hold – beliefs which distinguish them from most of the Protestant bodies. In particular, their unconditional acceptance of the divine inspiration of every word of the Bible (not in itself unique) led them to interpret literally the injunction in James 5.14,15: 'Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man...'

In this respect, the Peculiar People were nearer to Catholic than to Protestant practice, but in other ways they resembled the 'enthusiastic' branches of evangelical Christianity (see ENTHUSIASM). The women members of the sect wore small black bonnets; the men wore dark clothes and, for some reason, did not grow moustaches. No musical instrument was used in their worship, but hymns were sung with great fervour; the elder conducting the service would give out each verse of the hymn in turn, and when he and the other worshippers felt moved to do so, they would sing the same verse again and again – some hymns being, in any case, many verses long.

The Peculiar People's Hymn Book is one of Christendom's most remarkable hymnals. It contains 1058 hymns (including a few doxologies and graces). Many of these would be familiar to worshippers in other denominations but some have, to modern ears, a special quaintness. One such starts with the line 'How prone are professors to rest on their lees', each verse of it ending with the phrase 'Remember Lot's wife'. Another, headed 'An affectionate hint respecting public worship', rebukes those who arrive after the service has begun:

> Shall chapel doors rattle and umbrellas move,
> To show how you the service disapprove?...
> A little less indulgence in the bed –
> A little more contrivance in the head –
> A little more devotion of the mind –
> Would quite prevent your being so behind!

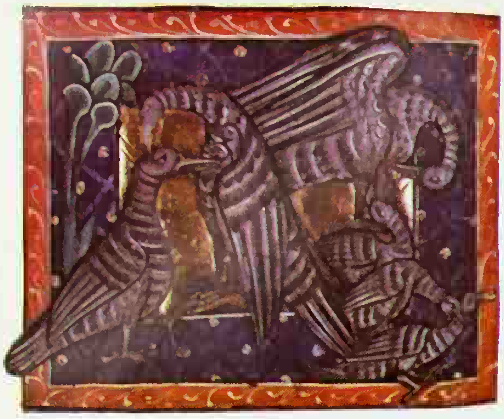
This hymn is 20 verses long – perhaps so that late-comers may at least have arrived before the end.

One outstanding figure in the history of the Peculiar People was Bishop William Heddle, who was born in 1846 and went south to Essex, from his native Orkney, to earn his living. (The men of the Peculiar People have always been working men, occupied in ordinary trades and respected by their neighbours.) After some time as an employee in Maldon and Chelmsford, he set up as a credit draper and outfitter. He went on foot through Essex, with packs strapped on his back and chest, until he could afford to buy a horse and cart. During this period he worshipped at a Congregational church and taught in Sunday school; but he was constantly troubled by a lack of certainty of salvation. One day, travelling near Orsett, he had a conversion experience: he felt 'drop into his heart' the words of a text, 'He tasted death for me.' He repeated the words, cried 'Thank God!' and that night (as he told his son) 'couldn't sleep for joy'.

William Heddle became so powerful and tireless a leader of the Peculiar People that eventually they elected him their bishop. At the age of 60 he was thought to be dying. In accordance with the principles of the sect, no doctor was sent for, but he was anointed and prayed over. He recovered, and lived until 1948, when he was almost 102.

Following Bishop Heddle's death, most of the Peculiar People combined with other denominations in the Union of Evangelical Churches, and their distinctive practices, such as the refusal to consult doctors, have fallen out of use. Some of the original congregations, however, and some of the older members – numbering at most a few hundred in all – continued to preserve, in remote Essex villages, the special character of the denomination.

PELICAN



Bodleian Library Filmstrip

In medieval times the pelican was believed to peck its own breast to supply its young with blood, and therefore became a symbol of parental affection and self-sacrifice: an illustration from a 13th century English bestiary incorporates this popular motif

THE LORE of the pelican has so little relevance to the actual behaviour of the bird that it might refer to a mythical species. Its chief interest is in illustrating the origin of an important symbol from confused ideas. The pelican was familiar in Egypt as a large bird opening its wide gape to enable the young to feed from the fish brought in its pouch; but the symbolical pelican's significance was mainly borrowed from the vulture. In the Bible vultures are not clearly distinguished from eagles. Thus in Exodus 19.4 we should read: 'I bore you on vultures' wings' rather than 'on eagles' wings' and in Deuteronomy 32.11: 'Like a vulture . . . that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings.' As the Hebrew words for 'vulture' and 'compassion' are very similar, an association was established between large birds and parental care which was apparently transferred to the pelican. The notion that the pelican feeds or revives its young with its own blood may perhaps be traced to vultures being seen to bring bloody morsels to their chicks.

The *Physiologus*, an early Christian compilation which wove together biblical ideas with Egyptian mythology concerning animals, contained two stories elaborated from these notions. One relates that the pelican loves its young very much but these, when they are large enough, strike at their parents. The old birds retaliate and kill the chicks; but soon they are overcome with compassion and the mother comes on the third day, opens her side and sheds blood on them, restoring them to life. It is also stated that in order to foil the snake the pelican makes its nest in a lofty situation and builds a hedge around it. The snake, representing the Devil, puffs his venom on the nest and kills the young. When the pelican returns she flaps her wings against her sides, drawing blood which rains down on the chicks and resuscitates them.

Christian writers used these stories to illustrate their teaching. St Jerome interpreted them as showing how those dead in sin were made alive through Christ's blood shed on the cross, and down the centuries emphasis was laid on the parental affection of the pelican. The representation in carved wood or stone and in stained glass windows of the bird pecking her breast to supply her young with blood became frequent in the Middle Ages as a symbol of Christ and the Eucharist. Such symbolism had special importance during centuries when few could read but the pelican also acquired considerable prominence in literature. In the 13th century St Thomas Aquinas wrote:

> Pelican of piety, Jesus, Lord and God,
> Cleanse thou me, unclean, in thy most
> precious blood.

John Skelton (c 1460–1529) also made use of the symbolic pelican in his verse:

> Then said the pelican,
> When my birds be slain,
> With my blood I them revive.
> Scripture doth record
> The same did our Lord,
> And rose from death to life.

Shakespeare could assume that his audiences would understand allusions to the symbolic pelican. King Lear, for instance, recalling the story of the bird's ungrateful young, refers to Regan and Goneril as 'pelican daughters'. But for centuries the 'pelican in her piety', as the heraldic representation of the bird was called, continued to be a symbol of the noble virtue of heroic self-sacrifice.

E. A. ARMSTRONG

Penance

In Christian theology, contrition for sin and a punishment inflicted for it, imposed by the sinner himself or by a priest; the Church gradually developed a system in which a sinner confessed privately to a priest, who might impose a penance on him and grant him forgiveness; the penance may be to say certain prayers or perform certain devotions or acts of self-denial or self-mortification.
See SACRAMENTS.

Penates

In Roman religion, household spirits who were 'gods of the food cupboard', guardians of the family larder; they were worshipped in association with the Lares and the hearth; food was offered to them at mealtimes, and on special occasions, such as birthdays, they would be given cakes, honey, wine, incense or sometimes a pig.
See ROME.

British Museum

PENTAGRAM

THE STAR with five points is traditionally a weapon of power in magic. Its symbolism is based on that of the number 5, which stands, among other things, for the living world of Nature, the four elements and the quintessence or the four directions and the centre; for the senses and the union of the sexes; for man as microcosm, man as the ruler of Nature, as the miniature image and potential master of all things (see FIVE).

The pentagram with one of its points projecting upwards can be imagined as a man's body with arms and legs extended, and is a symbol of the dominance of the divine spirit (the one upward point) over matter (the other four points). A reversed pentagram, with two points projecting upwards, is a symbol of evil and attracts sinister forces because it overturns the proper order of things and demonstrates the triumph of matter over spirit. The two upper points suggest the horns of the Devil. 'It is the goat of lust attacking the heavens with its horns,' said Eliphas Levi, 'a sign execrated by initiates of a superior rank.' The rituals of the Golden Dawn (see GOLDEN DAWN) allowed it to be used 'if there may arise an absolute necessity for working or conversing with a Spirit of an evil nature.'

Pentagrams are recommended in the European magical textbooks for keeping evil spirits at bay, demons being naturally frightened of a symbol whose five points stand for the wounds of Christ on the cross. Pentagrams should be drawn in the rim of the magic circle and outside it. According to the *Lemegeton*, the magician should wear the Pentagram of Solomon embroidered on his robe, or should draw it on parchment and carry it in his hand during a magical ceremony. This pentagram, with one point upwards, is drawn inside a circle. The name Tetragrammaton, the supreme name of the God of the Old Testament (see NAMES), is written inside the circle and the names of power Hallya, Ballater, Soluzen, Bellony, Hally are written inside the star.

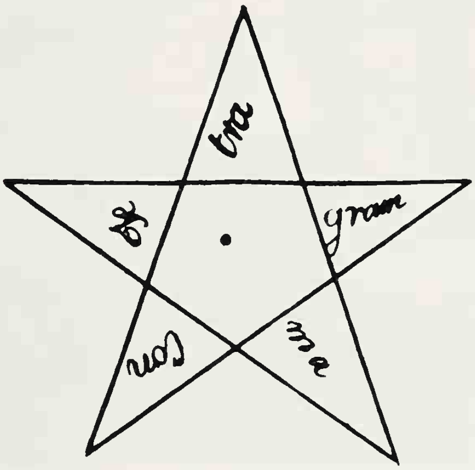
Modern magicians also make use of

pentagrams for invoking good influences or banishing evil ones. In *Transcendental Magic*, Eliphas Levi says: 'The pentagram, which in gnostic schools is called the blazing star, is the sign of intellectual omnipotence and autocracy. It is the star of the magi; it is the sign of the Word made flesh . . .' This is because it adds the 1 of godhead to the 4 of matter, and the name of Jesus or Pentagrammaton adds S, the letter of the Holy Spirit, to the four letters of the Tetragrammaton. When Levi attempted to conjure up the ghost of Apollonius of Tyana (see LEVI), his altar had a pentagram carved on it, and when a shrouded figure appeared before him, he placed one hand on the pentagram for protection.

The Golden Dawn's 'Lesser Ritual of the Pentagram' involved taking a steel dagger in hand and facing east, and then drawing an imagined pentagram on one's body. The operator touched his forehead and said Ateh (thou art), touched his breast and said Malkuth (the kingdom), touched his right shoulder and said ve-Geburah (and the power), touched his left shoulder and said ve-Gedulah (and the glory), clasped his hands in front of him and said Le-olam (for ever), and then holding the dagger between his fingers, pointing up, said Amen. (He had now made the sign of the 'cabalistic cross', combining the four directions and the centre.)

Next, he brought the dagger to the centre of the pentagram and pronounced the Tetragrammaton, imagining his voice carrying out to the east of the universe. He repeated the ritual facing south, west and north in turn and pronouncing the names Adonai, Eheieh and Agla respectively. Then he returned to his starting point, completing the circle of the ritual by touching the dagger to the centre of the first pentagram. With arms outstretched he said: 'Before me Raphael, behind me Gabriel, at my right hand Michael, at my left hand Auriel; before me flames the pentagram, behind me shines the six-rayed star.' Finally, he repeated the rite of drawing the cabalistic cross.

When one point projects upwards the pentagram may be used for invoking good influences and banishing evil ones, but a reversed pentagram, with two points projecting upwards, is a symbol of evil



Here the pentagrams were used to invoke good influences. A banishing formula followed the same ritual except that the lines of the pentagrams were drawn in reverse order. The invoking formula could be used as a morning prayer and the banishing one as an evening prayer. The banishing formula was also considered effective 'against impure magnetism' and for getting rid of distracting or disturbing thoughts. Israel Regardie comments (in *The Tree of Life*) that: 'The blind performance of this ritual . . . is quite useless, and is a waste of both time and energy. The imagination, simultaneously, should be stimulated to create these Pentagrams about the Magician on the Astral Plane in glowing figures of fire, so that through the streaming lines of light and power, representative of the spiritual being, no lesser entity of any kind dare make its way . . . The blazing five-pointed star is like the flaming sword which debarred Adam from the Edenic paradise.'

The Golden Dawn also had a much more complicated 'Supreme Invoking Ritual of the Pentagram'. The rituals were adopted, with minor alterations, by members of the Golden Dawn who later founded their own occult societies, including Aleister Crowley and Dion Fortune (see CROWLEY; FORTUNE).

The words pentagram and pentacle are sometimes confused. A pentacle (or pantacle) is not necessarily connected with the number 5. Pentacle probably comes from an old French word for 'to hang' and means a talisman or, by extension, any symbol used in magical operations.

The gifts of the Spirit described by St Paul, which included prophecy, healing and 'speaking in tongues', are sought by Pentecostalists as evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost; such dramatic demonstrations of Spirit power still characterize their meetings

PENTECOSTALIST MOVEMENT

MODERN PENTECOSTALISM began in a small Bible school, known as Bethel College, Topeka, Kansas, at the beginning of 1901, when Charles F. Parham, the head of the College, and a number of his students received the baptism of the Holy Spirit; it was signalized in some of them by their bursting forth into utterance in unknown tongues. It is the emphasized belief in the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, made manifest in some dramatic, ecstatic manner (usually by speaking in tongues), and in the continuing operation of the gifts of the Spirit, as described in the New Testament, which marks off Pentecostalism from other Protestant evangelical, fundamentalist groups.

Pentecostalists consider that all believers will experience the Spirit baptism, which is seen as endowment with power for God's service (as suggested in Acts 1. 4–8). This baptism is expected to take place after the believer has been 'born again', as Pentecostalists call the occasion of conversion, and is confirmation of his previous regeneration and sanctification. All the articles of their faith are supported by biblical proofs, for Pentecostalists accept the Bible literally, and believe it to be divinely inspired and incapable of error.

In the central points of their faith Pentecostalists share much with all evangelical Protestants. The immediate precursors of the Pentecostalists were the members of the various Holiness movements in the United States, many of whom had broken away from Methodism (see HOLINESS MOVEMENT). The Holiness groups emphasized the experience of sanctification as a second blessing following conversion. It was to this teaching that Pentecostalists added the teaching of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (and, subsequently, the gifts of the Spirit). The idea of Holy Spirit baptism existed before it was made explicit by the Pentecostalists, of course, and there is scriptural warrant for the teaching. It was in demanding manifested proofs of such baptism that the Pentecostalists added an element that Holiness groups had ignored or rejected.

A Message to Mankind

It is practically certain that Spirit baptism marked by speaking in unknown tongues was preached by Parham in 1900, before the onset of that experience among his students, the first of whom received this dramatic baptism on the first day of the new century, 1 January 1901. (Remembering that Pentecostalists live in the expectation of the coming of Christ, and that tongues came to be seen as a sign of his coming, this circumstance is not without significance.) As a considerable number of the students received the baptism, the group at Topeka now began to see itself as having not only a special mission but a special message for mankind. Some claimed to see visions of tongues of fire during the group meetings in which several people spoke in unknown tongues. They saw themselves as newly empowered to go out and preach the gospel; and although they were undoubtedly over-optimistic about the significance of their experiences and the nearness of the second advent of Christ, their evangelism in the Mid-West brought into being groups who espoused the new teaching even if they did not, as yet, think of themselves distinctively as Pentecostalists.

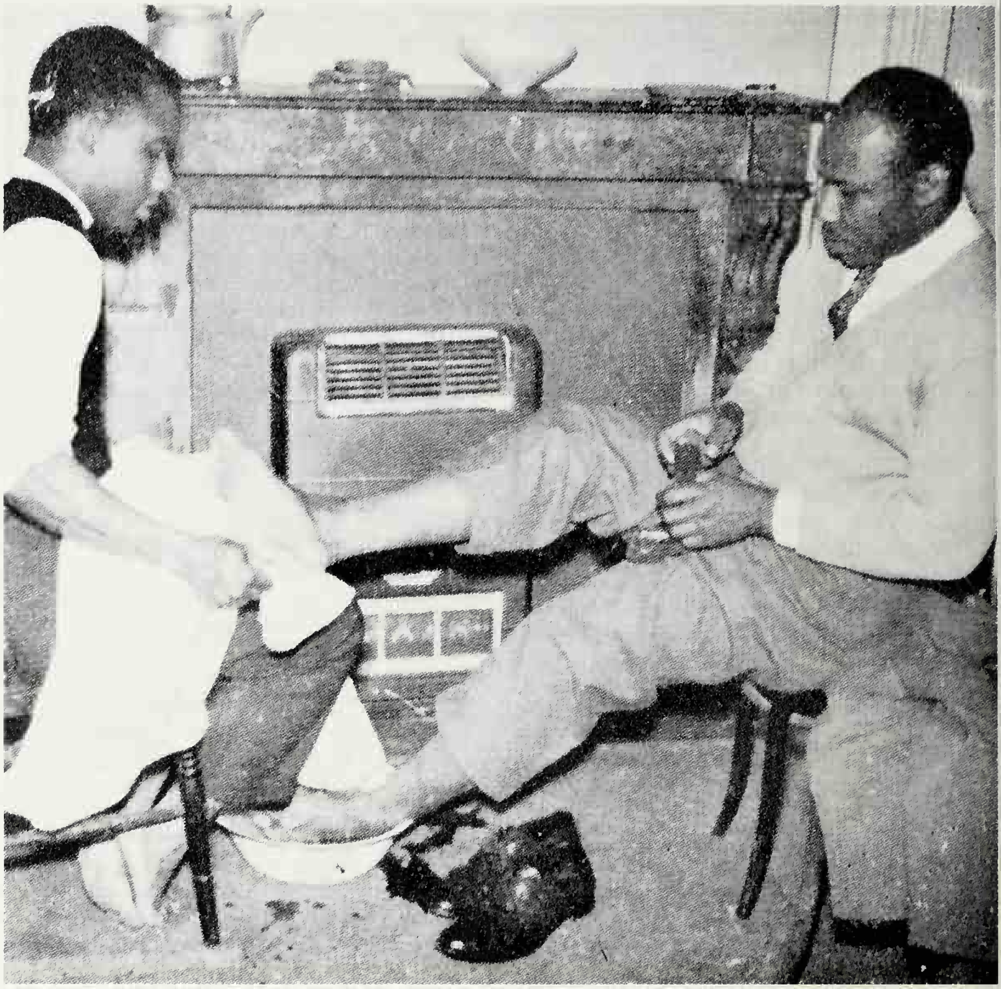
Members of small Holiness churches were among the first converts to Pentecostalism, but not all Holiness believers accepted the Pentecostal phenomena as authentic. It was among Holiness preachers, however, that Pentecostalism made its first significant impact; and when it was espoused by preachers in the Church of the Nazarene in Los Angeles, Pentecostalism obtained a footing from which it was soon to develop as an international movement. Many of its early converts in the rapidly growing city were Negroes, and the first meeting room was a derelict former Methodist mission in the Negro quarter in Azusa Street – a name still celebrated among Pentecostalists. Scenes of great enthusiasm occurred there, and crowds were drawn to the meetings at which the Holy Spirit was said to be acting so powerfully. From that time, 1906, Pentecostalism spread rapidly in Los Angeles and other groups met in Chicago, New York and Texas. Word of the new developments quickly spread through Holiness and other evangelical meetings throughout the country.

The Welsh Revival

An independent development in Wales, now known as the Welsh Revival of 1904–5, prepared the ground for the reception of Pentecostalism in Britain. During its course visions and miraculous healings were claimed, and speech in unknown tongues occurred. Many evangelicals, and particularly those who had been originally influenced by the preaching of Dwight Moody in his missions in Britain, and those associated with the Keswick Conference (founded in 1875) were aroused by the events reported from Wales. Although by no means all of the evangelicals in the denominations, nor even the independent Holiness meetings, were unsceptical about the claims of Pentecostalists, the Welsh Revival was seen as a distinct operation of the Holy Spirit – not least impressive because of the decline in criminal cases in areas affected by the revival. For some, however, the Welsh Revival stimulated interest in the news from America when this reached England some months later.

The principal disseminator of Pentecostal teachings in Europe was an Englishman, T. B. Barratt, who was pastor of the City Mission, a Methodist church in Oslo. Barratt was in the United States in 1906, attended Pentecostal meetings, became convinced of the truth of the teachings and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Before the end of the year he had led some members of his congregation in Oslo into the same experience. News of Norwegian Pentecostalism spread rapidly, and in March 1907 Barratt was visited by the Rev. A. A. Boddy, the Rector of Monkwearmouth, near Sunderland. Boddy had seen the Welsh Revival at first hand and had been very much impressed. He now rapidly espoused Pentecostal teachings, and held long meetings in Monkwearmouth where his parishioners prayed for the descent of the Holy Spirit.

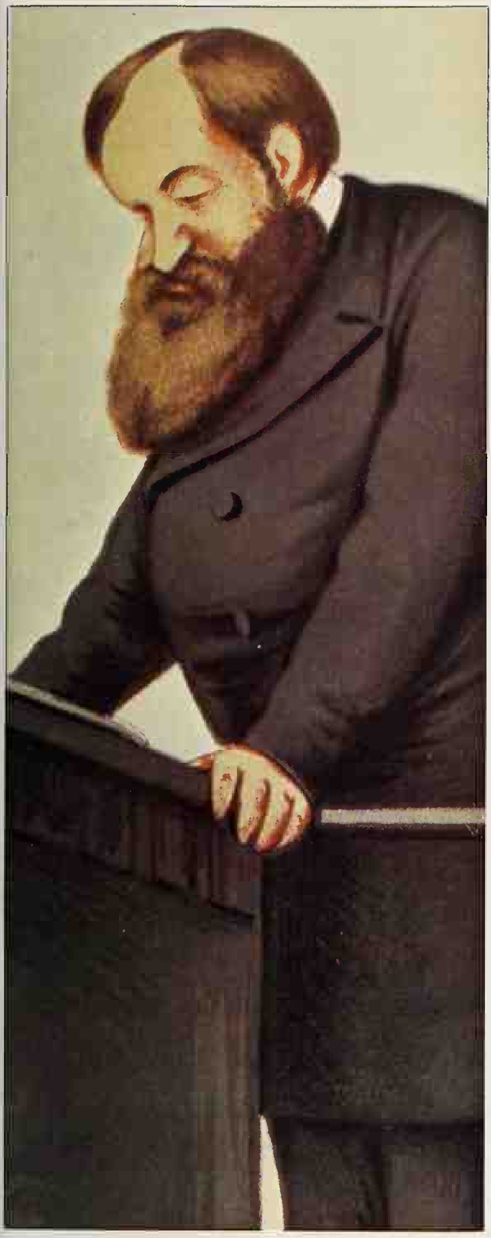
Barratt visited England later in that year, and the news of Pentecostalism was now widely disseminated. Groups began in various places, and although many of those who sought Pentecostal experience remained in their own denominations (particularly in the Anglican Church), others began to meet separately for more enthusiastic forms of worship and spontaneous prayer and praise than could be readily accomodated in the established denominations. Although some prominent Holiness leaders opposed the new movement, it won a considerable number of converts from Holiness people and in the independent Bible schools of Holiness persuasion. In the rest of Europe, particularly as a result of Barratt's work – he was an indefatigable traveller in the cause he espoused – the movement gained sizeable groups of followers. It had its greatest successes in Sweden, Finland and Germany.



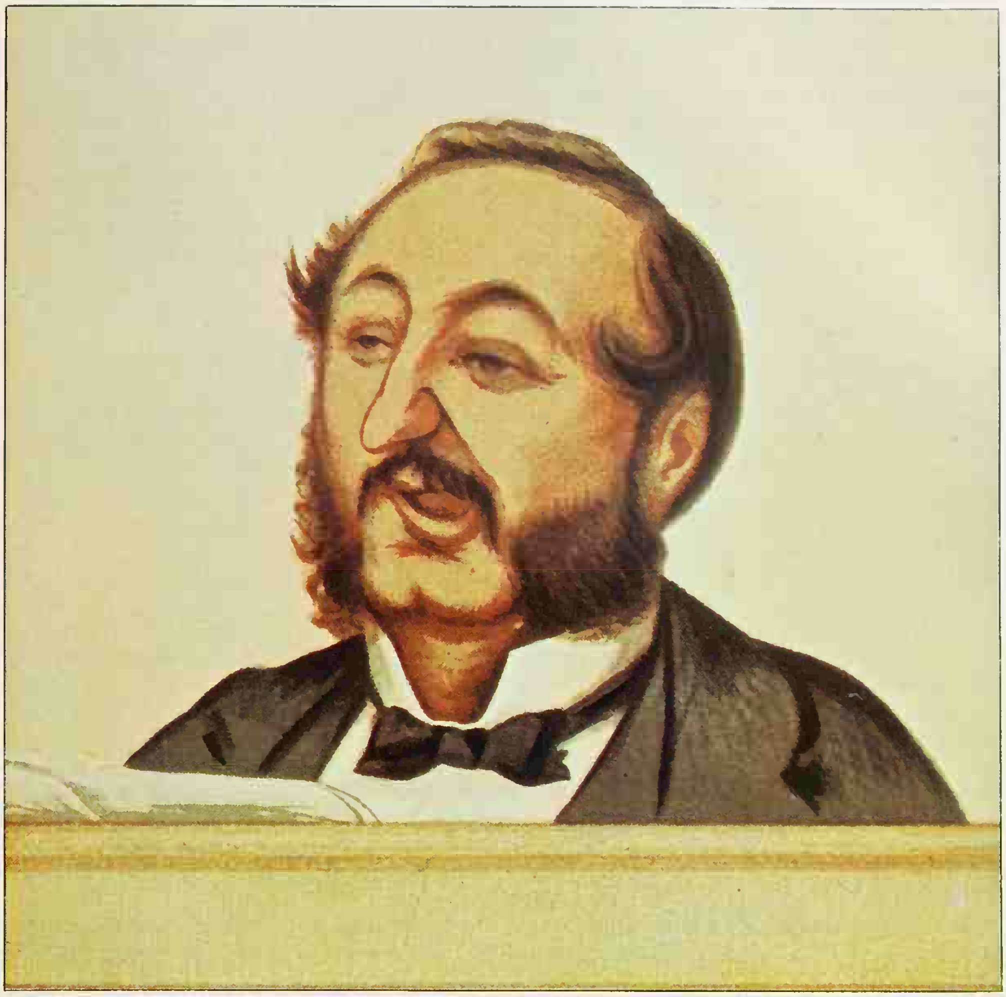
Store Front Churches

The most rapid expansion of the new movement, however, occurred in its country of origin, the United States. Here there was a climate of much greater religious tolerance, propitious conditions for new organizations to grow and a much more general receptivity to new ideas in religion. Because Pentecostalism arose as a spontaneous movement, without the continued guidance of any one leader but rather on the basis of devotional practices that were added to widely accepted Protestant evangelical ideas, it did not long remain as one movement. It lacked internal and organizational coherence, and was quickly taken over by local leaders and congregations who, whilst they had in common their belief in Holy Spirit baptism and the availability of the gifts of the Spirit, might easily differ on other doctrinal matters or ethical prescriptions, and most particularly on church organization.

Some of the churches that became Pentecostal were run, and even owned, by the preacher himself. Others were controlled by their lay congregations. Yet others evolved administrative organizations and central headquarters. Though it is appropriate to refer to the Pentecostal movement as one phenomenon, it must be remembered that the movement always consisted, even at the



Chris Barker



Chris Barker

Top left **Among some West Indian Pentecostalists the washing of each other's feet is an established rite. Pentecostalism has shown a special appeal to immigrants and in Britain the most vigorous sects among the West Indian immigrant population are Pentecostalist** ***Bottom left*** **Early Pentecostalist services were sometimes marked by sensationalism and highly emotional behaviour: Aimée Semple McPherson catered for this element in dramatic services held in Los Angeles. Pentecostal teachings concerning the descent of the Spirit upon believers were anticipated by 19th century Holiness preachers such as Dwight Moody** ***(above)*** **and his associate Ira David Sankey** ***(right)*****; their evangelizing missions prepared the way for the later development of Pentecostalism**

beginning, of many different groups, and eventually of separately organized and entirely independent denominational organizations. The largest of the movements that developed in the United States, and which established many branches overseas, was the Assemblies of God, which today has hundreds of thousands of members all over the United States, and which maintains a large printing press and a university of its own. In contrast there are uncounted tiny missions, many of them springing up suddenly in the back streets of large cities, and often disappearing again. Perhaps the majority of the 'store front' churches in the Negro and Puerto Rican districts of New York, Los Angeles and other large American cities are in practice Pentecostalist.

Stunts and Sex Appeal

Some colourful movements have emerged within Pentecostalism. One of these was the Holiness organization of A. J. Tomlinson, known as the Church of God (Tomlinson) – a designation necessary to distinguish it from the many organizations that call themselves simply 'Church of God'. This movement, arising in Tennessee and North Carolina, grew rapidly in the United States, and also acquired a large following among West Indians. The Church split on two occasions, the second time on A. J. Tomlinson's death in 1953 when his two sons, Milton and Homer, quarrelled. The majority followed Milton, but Homer Tomlinson also headed a Church of God, proclaimed himself bishop, and later declared himself king of the world and leader of the Theocratic Party. He travelled the world crowning himself king in over 100 nations.

Scarcely less startling was the career of Aimée Semple McPherson, a revivalist who settled in Los Angeles in 1918. There she built the Angelus Temple, in which she produced dramatic services: sex appeal and stunts were her methods of drawing in large crowds. She once drove onto the stage of her church on a motorcycle, braked to a sudden halt and shouted, 'Stop! You're driving straight to hell!' On another occasion she suddenly disappeared, reputedly kidnapped and held to ransom: a cynical Press believed that she had in fact run off for a short holiday with one of the radio technicians on the staff of her church. Her movement survived her death, and still claims tens of thousands of adherents in the United States and some in Europe.

It would be unfair to suggest that these bizarre organizations are characteristic of Pentecostalism, however. The vast majority of those who congregate in Pentecostal churches are devout, respectable and sincere believers, many of whom lead lives of exemplary probity. It is certainly the case that the movement is somewhat susceptible to emotionalism, and this was particularly so in its early days. At the long meetings scenes of intense excitement occurred, and before the movement acquired stable organization and evolved instruments of control, some of the gatherings of Pentecostalists were undoubtedly marked by excesses of one sort or another. This was particularly so in the backwoods areas of the Mid-West and South of the United States. Parham himself, the first Pentecostalist, was a man of very dubious sexual reputation – although it must be added that he quickly lost influence in the movement. Perhaps more important than emotional aberrances of this kind were the misunderstandings that arose in the early days concerning the phenomenon of glossolalia or speaking in tongues.

There seems to be no doubt that at some meetings people simulated this inspired utterance given by the Holy Spirit, to sully the reputation of others or to get their own way in matters concerning the congregation. Business matters were sometimes settled, and marriages prompted, by supposed utterances of inspired character. Perhaps more commonly, individuals who felt that they had been given great power by the Holy Spirit in the matter of languages believed that they were summoned to undertake missionary work in foreign places. There are stories, although their absolute authenticity cannot be guaranteed, even though they are told by Pentecostal historians themselves, of people actually going out to foreign stations to preach, convinced that they had been given the necessary linguistic abilities by the Holy Spirit – only to find that they had deceived themselves.

Discipline Enforced

Episodes such as these were probably very rare in the history of Pentecostalism in Britain. Most of the early converts were already well grounded in the Bible, in Holiness meetings or in the orthodox Protestant denominations. Undoubtedly at the beginning the use of the gifts of the Spirit (particularly the gift of tongues) was much less adequately regulated than later became the case, but for many people the Pentecostal movement represented an inspiration to return to Christian belief and behaviour. The early leaders of British Pentecostalism – the Welsh brothers George and Stephen Jeffreys, Donald Gee, Howard and John Carter, Thomas Myerscough and J. Nelson Parr – were vigorous and respected Christians, and even though their meetings were marked by a fervour not seen in the older denominations, they firmly applied St Paul's prescription that all things should be done decently and in order. As the British Pentecostal denominations became established, the number of utterances in tongues at one meeting became restricted to two or three, and the interpretation of tongues (by the gift of interpretation given by the Holy Spirit) was demanded. It also became the established expectation of Pentecostalists that all Spirit utterance should conform to and confirm the word of the gospel. The ministers of these denominations, whilst emphasizing that the Holy Spirit should never be quenched (the sin of the orthodox Churches), stressed the affinity of the Spirit to standards of discipline and decorum.

The Pentecostal Churches have undoubtedly become increasingly similar to older denominations in their worship, even though it is still possible, particularly at prayer meetings, to see weeping, groaning worshippers and the occasional prostrate figure, in some Pentecostal meetings in Britain. Baptism of the Holy Spirit remains a dramatic occasion for observers, and an ecstatic one for the individual concerned. The gifts of the Spirit (described in Corinthians, chapter 12) are, with the baptism, the central, distinctive features of Pentecostal belief; Pentecostalists, therefore, necessarily believe in divine healing and miracles.

There has, however, been a tendency to imply that the 'discernment of spirits' – by which authentic gifts of the Holy Ghost are distinguishable from simulations – is a gift particularly possessed by ministers. There has also been a notable tendency to suggest that the gift of prophecy is more concerned with 'forth-telling' than with 'fore-telling'.

The Pentecostal movement drew most of its early converts from among the poorer sections of industrial nations. Apart from the United States, where it quickly gained followers in the rural areas of the Mid-West, the South and in California, its principal centres have been urban. Emotionally oriented movements normally have the widest appeal among the least educated and most socially and economically deprived sections of the population. Such people are characterized by a greater readiness to accept sanctioned circumstances of emotional release by responsiveness to a charged atmosphere, and willingness to believe in exceptional dispensations from the normal operation of cause and effect, by contrast with more sophisticated and materially better placed sections of the public. Pentecostal meetings also provide intense, emotional and reassuring situations for those for whom the wider society has little to offer: and these tend to be the less privileged groups.

Appeal to Immigrants

Pentecostalism appears to be particularly attractive to immigrants, both from the countryside to the cities and from one country to another. This appeal no doubt partly stems from the fact that it offers situations in which disturbed emotions are given sanctioned (and sanctified) expression, for immigrants frequently undergo problems of adjustment and experience feelings of inadequacy. The acting out of tensions and obsessions may be facilitated by permissive religious groups, more particularly of course in the less formally organized and more spontaneous Pentecostal assemblies. The promise of divine help and power – and in some respects its manifestation – in Pentecostal assemblies, may enhance the movement's appeal to the immigrant. As friendly groups with a powerful ethic of self-help and emphasis on highly idealized virtues, they may also materially help the immigrant to improve his position.

It may not be pressing matters too far to suggest that the very emphasis on speech – the gift of tongues – has a unique appeal for the immigrant. For a man who has imperfect command of the language of his new environment (whether it be merely the city for the countryman, or the new country for the foreigner) the idea of a higher power, and a more effective form of speech, has an obvious appeal. It symbolizes the felt needs of the immigrant. In the light of this it is not surprising that the most vigorous sects among West Indian immigrants to Britain have been Pentecostal, that very large numbers of Italian immigrants to America and Brazil, even though Catholics, espoused the cult in those countries, and that large numbers of Chilean and Brazilian migrants from the countryside to the the city have, in the last few decades, become Pentecostalists.

The Charismatic Tide

Pentecostalism has grown steadily rather than dramatically in the advanced countries of the world, but because so many separate sects are involved, definitive figures are impossible to obtain. Conservative estimates at the end of the 1970s suggested that there were perhaps seven million Pentecostalists around the world.

Since then the figure must have increased very substantially. There has been considerable growth in Third World countries, with the Assemblies of God making particularly vigorous progress in Brazil and Chile, as well as in such traditionally Roman Catholic countries as Italy and Portugal. In 1992 the Zion Christian Church, the largest Pentecostal organization in South Africa, alone claimed a membership of 6 million, while the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel claimed to have 3000 congregations in Brazil, with a high conversion rate.

When the Pope visited Brazil in 1980, the percentage of the population describing itself as Roman Catholic was 95 per cent. There was embarrassment among Brazilian Catholics that, when he made a second visit in 1991, the figure had fallen to 75 per cent. Much of the difference was due to successful Protestant Pentecostal proselytizing.

At the same time, though not strictly part of Pentecostalism in the traditional sense, there has been a rapid growth of the charismatic movement that began to gather strength in the 1960s inside the orthodox Christian Churches. Groups meeting in Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Baptist churches, and sometimes interdenominationally, have increasingly experienced speaking in tongues and the other 'gifts of the Spirit', while belief in the phenomenon of the baptism of the Holy Spirit has grown among people who differ considerably in social position and educational background from the typical adherents of the older Pentecostal religions.

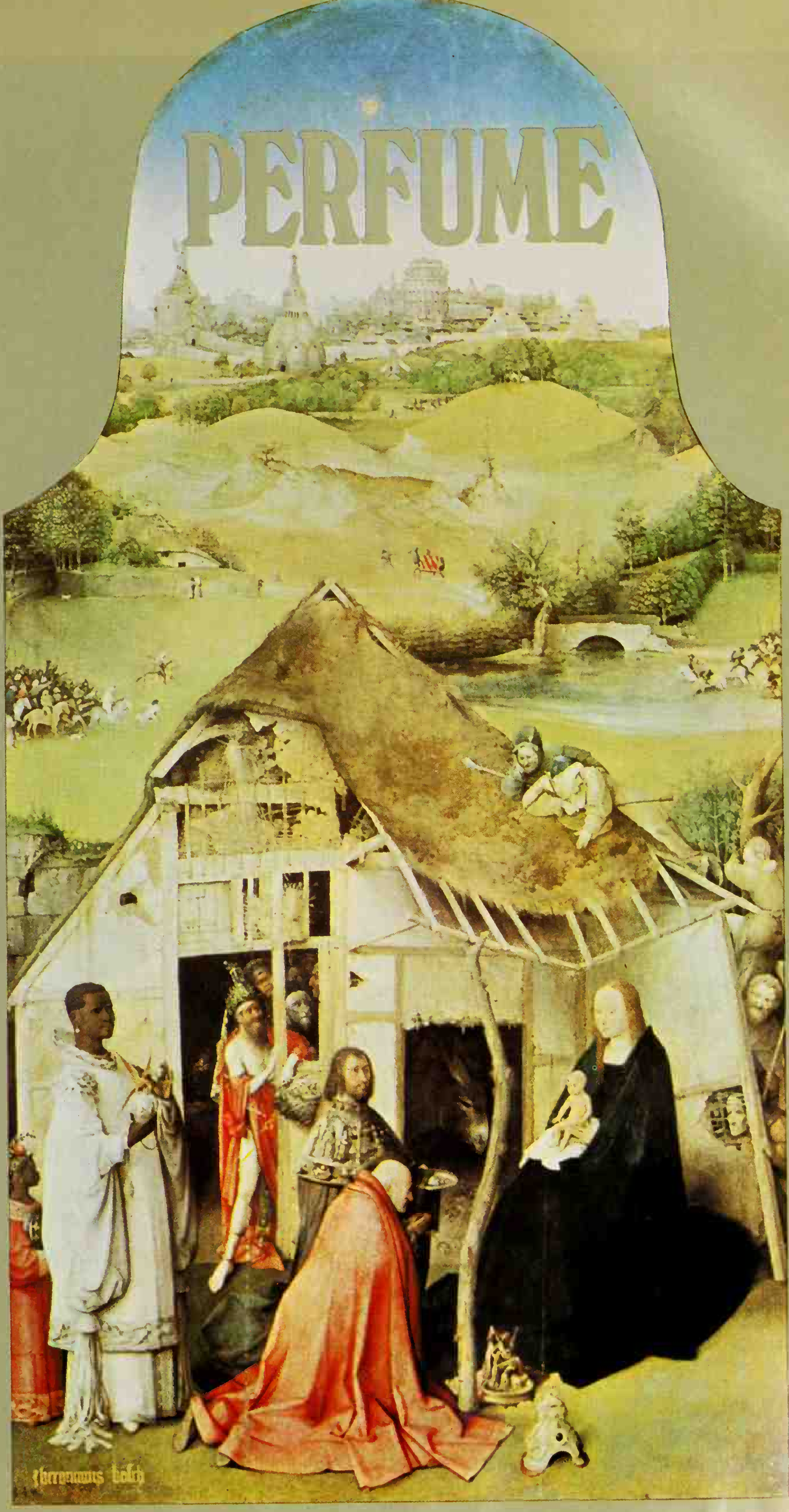
This 'renewal movement', as it is sometimes called, appears to be on a rising curve, and by the early 1990s the total number of Catholic charismatics in the world was put, reliably or not, as high as 50 million. The principal Churches, while not endorsing the charismatic type of worship as entirely orthodox, have not set their faces against it either.

(See also ENTHUSIASM; SPEAKING IN TONGUES.)

BRYAN WILSON*

FURTHER READING: W.J.Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: the Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (Augsburg Publishing, 1972); D. Harrell, *All Things Are Possible* (Indiana Univ. Press, 1975); Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics* (Harper & Row, 1983); D. Scott Rogo, *The Infinite Boundary* (Dodd, Mead, 1987); R.M. Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited* (Oxford University Press, 1979).

PERFUME


Jheronimus bosch

Michael Holford

The power of perfume was once thought capable of keeping the plague at bay, and spirits were attracted or repelled by appropriate odours. Even now its ability to arouse emotion makes it a useful auxiliary to the art of love

THE SENSE of smell was used in the past far more than it is now, for it was an important tool of the hunter and, equally important, served to tell when danger threatened – the source of the common phrase 'to smell danger'. There is also some reason for the belief that human beings once had the ability to identify one another by scent; even now Europeans will often claim to detect an unpleasant odour among coloured people, while the latter may insist that the white man's body reeks of decay.

As a result, smells still carry strong emotional overtones; indeed St Hilarion, one of the desert fathers, claimed that he could detect a person's vices by the smell of his garments. Because of its compelling power, perfume has sometimes been considered a form of sorcery. It began its association with the supernatural powers as an adjunct to religion: its history in this connection can be traced back some 5000 years to the burnt sacrifices offered by ancient priests as food for their gods. The smoke arising from burning carcases is extremely repugnant and it was no doubt with the object of rendering the operation more pleasing to both man and god that the custom of perfuming the temples by the burning of incense was first introduced. This is affirmed by the word perfume itself, which comes from the Latin and means, literally, 'through the smoke', being originally applied to fumigation as well as to scent. As late as 1560 an English writer recorded a case of sickness in which a woman 'died of the plague and they perfumed the house with grains of juniper'.

Perfecting the Human Body

In early times offerings of incense were restricted to the temple priests, their use for secular purposes being prohibited. The main ingredients were then myrrh, cinnamon and other scented plants, and resinous gums.

Among the ancient Egyptians the religious and secular aspects of perfume were combined, for it was used in conjunction with

Because of its compelling power, perfume has sometimes been considered a form of sorcery

The burning of perfumes has been a feature of worship for some 5000 years: the sweet smell was thought to render the sacrifice more acceptable to the deity
Left **A Buddhist priest lights a candle in an incense-filled Japanese temple *Below* Highly wrought censer of the mid 14th century from Ramsey Abbey in Huntingdonshire *Below right* Bronze incense burner of about the 2nd century AD from South Arabia**
Previous page **'Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.' Of the presents brought by the Magi to the infant Christ, frankincense and myrrh were costly ingredients of incense and were therefore a suitable offering to make to a deity: *The Adoration of the Magi* by Hieronymus Bosch**

the embalming of the dead; the soul in fact was thought to ascend to heaven upon a cloud of incense smoke. Because perfume was assumed to have the power of perfecting the human body, it became one of the aims of ancient perfumers to discover scents which seemed to be natural emanations from the body itself. In Egypt young gallants used as many as 15 different kinds of scent to lure the fair sex, and beautiful women concealed tiny globules of aromatic substances in their hair.

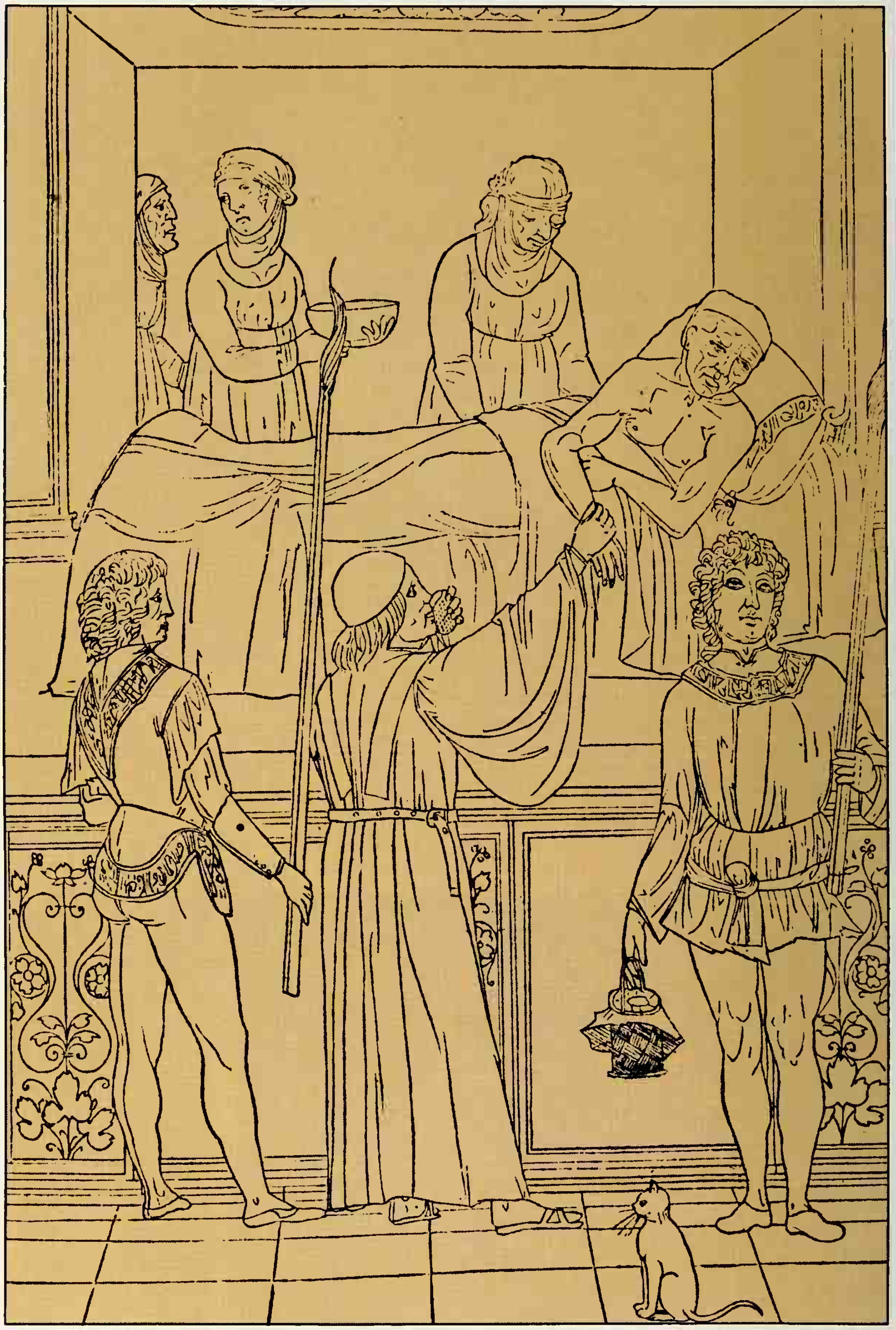
The Hebrews on their escape from captivity in Egypt took with them a knowledge of incense and perfumes, much of which centuries later found its way to Europe. Among the Greeks the cosmetic use of perfumes involved the application of specific types to the various parts of the body. The nobleman of Rome used mint for his armpits, palm oil for his jaws and marjoram for his hair.

Those who make gifts of perfume at Christmas no doubt forget that the very first Christmas present consisted of frankincense and myrrh (as well as gold) given to the infant Christ; both these precious aromatic gums are used in incense. It is a sad commentary upon Christian civilization that it was not until the conclusion of the Dark Ages, when the returning Crusaders reintroduced the sensual delights of the East to Europe, that perfume became re-established in the West.

During the Renaissance, Italy became the principal manufacturer of perfumes, later

Victoria and Albert Museum

Michael Holford British Museum



forfeiting the initiative to France, which has maintained its supremacy in the trade ever since. Lack of sanitation and the absence of personal hygiene during the 16th and 17th centuries rendered the use of perfumes a necessity among those who attempted to maintain some semblance of a civilized existence. In Shakespeare's London the apothecaries of Bucklersbury were famous for their herbs and simples and aromatic spices, and the perfumed dandies of the court were said to smell like 'Bucklersbury in simple-time'.

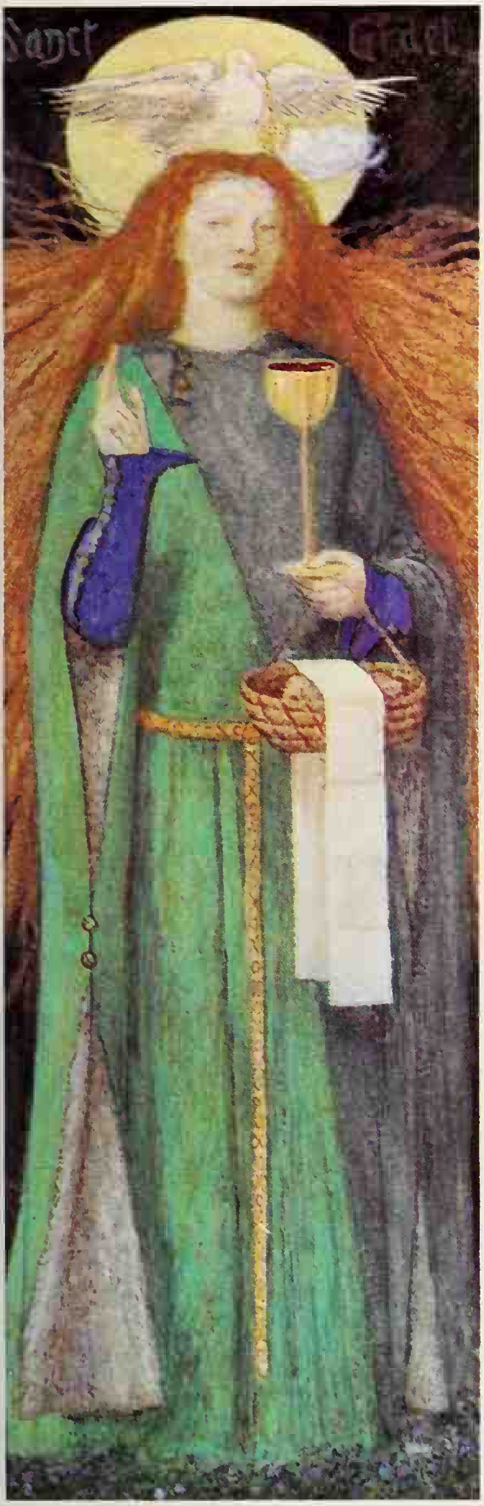
Fumes had long formed an adjunct to medicine. Temple smoke was highly recommended by the Greeks for respiratory disorders, and before the introduction of chimneys in England in the 15th century, wheezing old gentlemen swore by the prophylactic qualities of hearth smoke, at the same time inveighing against the foul smelling fumes of the newly utilized sea coal, which made them choke. In 16th century Europe relics of this same attitude could still be observed in the lighting of seasonal bonfires at the onset of winter: the fumes were intended to clear the land of demons and witches and drive pestilence from the cattle.

Fumigation of Fiends

Disease was thought to strike through the medium of an evil vapour, and so during the recurrent attacks of plague the physician would tend his patients masked in a grotesque snout filled with sweet-smelling herbs and spices: bunches of aromatic herbs were burned on huge fires with the object of clearing the air and without the slightest consciousness of imitating an ancient sacrificial rite. It was customary to sprinkle perfumed water about sick rooms and upon clothing, and judges were presented with posies to sniff as a safeguard against contracting 'jail fever' from the prisoners brought before them. Domestic fumigation by smoke came under censure from Dr John Caius, who in 1552 vigorously attacked 'the foolish smokings of shirts, smocks and kerchiefs' which was then a popular hygienic safeguard.

Since pleasant smells were the attributes of holiness, foul ones were necessarily thought to belong to Satan, who reeked abominably, as might be expected of one whose abode lay deep within the bowels of the earth. The clouds of sulphurous fumes which lingered for hours in any house which had received a visit from the infernal regions necessitated the use of powerful deodorants before it could again become tenable; but in those cases in which a demon was said to have taken up occupation within the body of a human being, it was foul smells rather than pleasant ones which were introduced as a counter-measure. In 1586 when the exorcist Edmunds attempted to expel a devil from a hysteric, he first forced his patient to drink salad oil, 'his head afterwards held over a bowl of burning brimstone – and further dosed with asafoetida and other stinking gear'. Possibly it was under the inspiration of some primitive version of the doctrine that 'like cures like', that foul odours were considered efficacious for the expulsion of a foul fiend. In yet another case, in 1665, a possessed woman subjected to fumigation was made to inhale a fetid infusion of boiling herbs, the treatment being discontinued only after a mouse had leaped from her mouth. In obstinate cases a portrait of the Devil would be sprinkled with holy water and afterwards thoroughly fumigated.

Tobacco smoke, regarded by most smoking addicts as aromatic, came under withering attack from King James I of England in his *Counterblast to Tobacco*; this specialist in demonology suggested, however, that the fumes might be useful to 'chase out devils'. On the other hand there were many who were firmly of the opinion



John Webb/Tate Gallery

Left **Evil smells were formerly believed to be a direct source of infection: the doctor who attends to a plague victim therefore holds an impregnated sponge to his nose, while servants burn aromatics to clear the air *Above* A dove symbolizing the Holy Ghost carries a censer in its beak, in Rossetti's painting *The Damozel of the Sanct Grael***

Of the Virtue and Efficacy of Perfumes

Let no man wonder how great things suffumigations can do in the air; especially when they shall, with Pliny, consider that, by certain vapours exhaled from proper suffumigations, aerial spirits are raised; also thunder and lightnings, and the like: as the liver of a cameleon being burnt on the house top, will raise showers and lightnings; the same effect has the head and throat, if they are burnt with oaken wood. There are some suffumigations under the influences of the stars, that cause images of spirits to appear in the air, or elsewhere: for if coriander, smallage, henbane, and hemlock be made to fume, by invocations spirits will soon come together, being attracted by the vapours which are most congruous to their own natures; hence they are called the herbs of the spirits . . . Also, the lungs of an ass, being burnt, puts all poisonous things to flight; and the fume of the burnt hoof of a horse drives away mice; the same does the hoof of a mule; and with the hoof of the left foot flies are driven away. And if a house, or any place, be smoaked with the *gall* of a *cuttle-fish*, made into a confection with red storax, roses, and lignum aloes, and then there be some sea-water or blood cast into that place, the whole house will seem to be full of water or blood.

Francis Barrett *The Magus* (1801)

that tobacco smoke was more attractive than repellent, some fishermen even insisting that its smoke lured fish into their nets. On the east coast of Scotland the aroma of very old brandy was supposed to have a similar effect.

Fumes have always played a prominent part in the magical arts from the time of the priestess of the Delphic oracle, who is said to have breathed fumes before reaching a state of prophetic frenzy, to the priests of modern India who inhale the aromatic smoke arising from a burning sacred plant. Javanese mediums observe a similar rite and in Haiti perfumes are used in Voodoo ceremonies.

Perfumes and fumigants have a prominent role in European magic. During the preparation of a magic circle, herbs and other aromatic substances were cast upon a charcoal fire burning in a small brazier in order to attract spirits, who would then take on visible shapes by enveloping themselves in the smoke. When it was necessary to summon devils coriander, hemlock and sandalwood were used together with henbane, which was a powerful narcotic and helped to induce a state of temporary insanity.

Ghostly Odours

Perfumes have an established place in psychic realms, particularly in ghost lore. Who has not heard some old ghost story in which the returned dead have made known their presence by a waft of the well-loved scent with which they were intimately associated in life? John Aubrey, the antiquary, recorded the materialization of an apparition at Cirencester, 'which being demanded whether a good spirit or bad returned no answer but disappeared with a curious perfume and a most melodious twang'.

Perfume as an expression of mood and personality is a valuable auxiliary to the arts of love; in fact it belongs high up on the list of aphrodisiacs. By acting upon the olfactory nerves it stimulates the brain, arousing powerful emotions of sympathy and sensual attraction. In the South Seas today a garland of flowers is an expression of erotic desire and in the same way there exists no more powerful token of passion in the language of love than an expensive perfume.

Alternatively, odours have sometimes been used to achieve the reverse effect. During the Middle Ages monks and nuns when beset by lustful thoughts sought refuge from the Devil's wiles by sniffing camphor, a custom which inspired that favourite maxim of the Salerno medical school:

Camphor if smelled
A man will geld.

To the sensualist perfume opens the way to indescribable joys. It was one of the supreme delights of Mohammed, and the Islamic paradise was impregnated with exotic scents. In more recent times the male of the species has begun once again to make judicious use of toilet waters, scented shaving lotions and deodorant sprays, not merely with the object of offsetting the less pleasant odours of his two million sweat glands or even to add to his attractions as a sexual partner, but for highly laudable aesthetic considerations.

Cologne Before a Battle

Some people consider that perfume exerts an influence upon thought itself, equating, for example, pure mountain air with vigour, solitariness and the heroic. In the folklore of flowers, those with heavy scents are generally considered unlucky since they fill the mind with thoughts of death. That perfume clears the brain is suggested by the fact that Napoleon Bonaparte used to immerse his head in eau-de-Cologne before commencing a battle.

The whole world has been ransacked in its time to provide the ingredients of the perfumer's art. Animal life makes its contribution in the form of the secretions of civet cats and musk deer, the sperm whale has supplied its ambergris and the beaver has surrendered its castoreum. Aromatic barks and spices and oils from the crushed stems, petals and leaves of flowers have all supplied their distinctive odours. Rose petals provided not only the couches of the luxurious sybarites of Roman times but when distilled as rose-water bathed the hands and faces of courtesans and queens. Some 17,000 odours have now been distinguished, some good and some bad; and a system of classification has recently been evolved by a chemist, Dr Septimus Piesse, by which the acuteness of a particular scent is equated with a note on the musical scale. The perfumer can then more easily tell which perfume 'notes' will harmonize or clash.

In the symbolism of dreams perfume means romantic happiness, but it could with equal facility be named 'eternity'. The nostalgic power of scents is well known, and has even on occasion been exploited by psychiatrists to revive the buried memories of their patients.
(See also INCENSE.)

ERIC MAPLE

PERMANENT PARANORMAL OBJECTS

IN 1988 a German parapsychology journal, *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie*, published an account of the apparent creation of a permanent paranormal object (PPO) by a sensitive named Silvio Meyer, the year before. He succeeded in intertwining two square frames, one made of paper and the other of aluminum foil. According to his own account, he cut the paper frame, put the uncut aluminum frame inside it and then held the two together for about ten minutes until the cut frame healed up, as it were, and the two frames were interlinked. Unfortunately, this happened when he was alone, with no one present to observe it, and its genuineness has been questioned.

A PPO is a material object which could not have been produced by any normal means. Other paranormal feats can always be explained away by sceptics, but a PPO would be an examinable proof of the paranormal that could not be argued away. No such object as yet exists beyond challenge, though it has been suggested that the faces which appeared in the 'House of Faces' case in Spain may be PPOs. In 1971 mysterious faces began appearing on the floor of a house in the remote village of Belmez de la Moraleda, in a way which baffled investigators. It was suggested that they were unconsciously created by someone in the house by psychokinesis (mind over matter). They were still there early in 1992.

Related to PPOs are apports (from French *apporter*, 'to bring'), which are objects moved from one place to another, ostensibly by paranormal means. Sometimes the objects seem to pass through walls or doors, and are often reported to feel hot when they appear. There were dramatic accounts of the phenomenon in the early days of Spiritualism and it has also been reported in poltergeist cases. The Indian mystic Sai Baba has a reputation for producing quantities of objects out of thin air (see SAI BABA).

PERSEPHONE

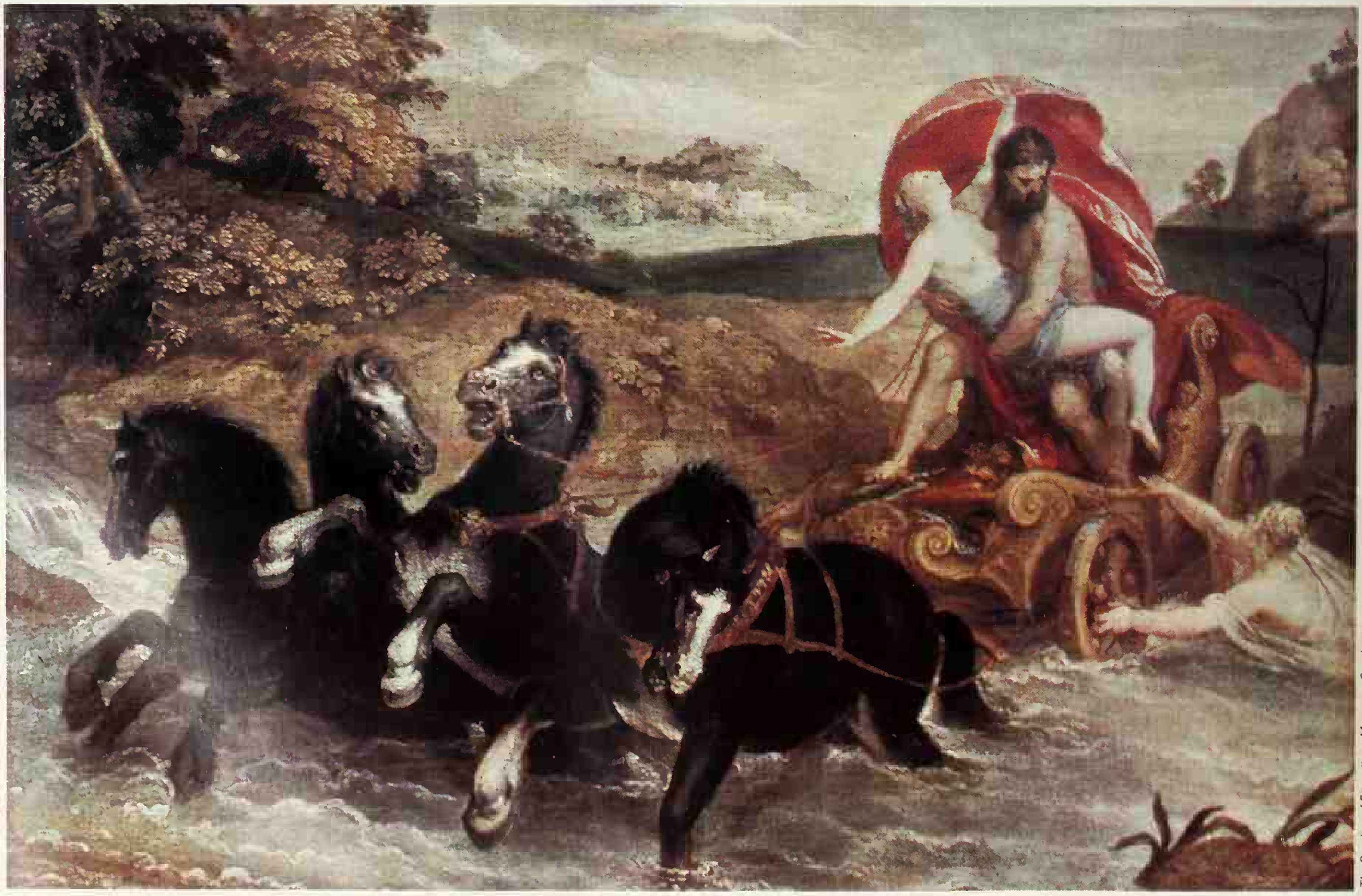
IN THE LITERATURE of Greek mythology Persephone appears most often as the young daughter of Zeus and Demeter, who was carried off by Hades (or Pluto) to be his bride. Her name has taken various forms – Persephoneia, Phersephone, Persephassa, Phersephatta, Periphone – according to literary or spoken dialect. No etymology has been found for it in Greek in any of the various forms. It is therefore likely that it was pre-Greek and was difficult for Greeks to pronounce. The classical Latin Proserpina seems to be a simple mispronunciation.

Homer calls her 'dread Persephone' and makes her the wife of the lord of the underworld, terrible herself and sender of terrifying ghosts and apparitions, like Hecate – with whom she was sometimes identified. She controls the appearance of spectres, including that of Tiresias in the *Odyssey* (book 11) when Odysseus consults the oracle of the dead.

In this book, indeed, she seems more truly ruler of the underworld than Hades himself. As such she perhaps descends from a pre-Greek goddess who would have been, like the Sumerian Ereshkigal, mistress of the underworld. Hesiod in the *Theogony* is the first to call her daughter of Demeter and alludes to her rape. But the superb myth of her abduction and of Demeter's angry grief appears for the first time in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter.

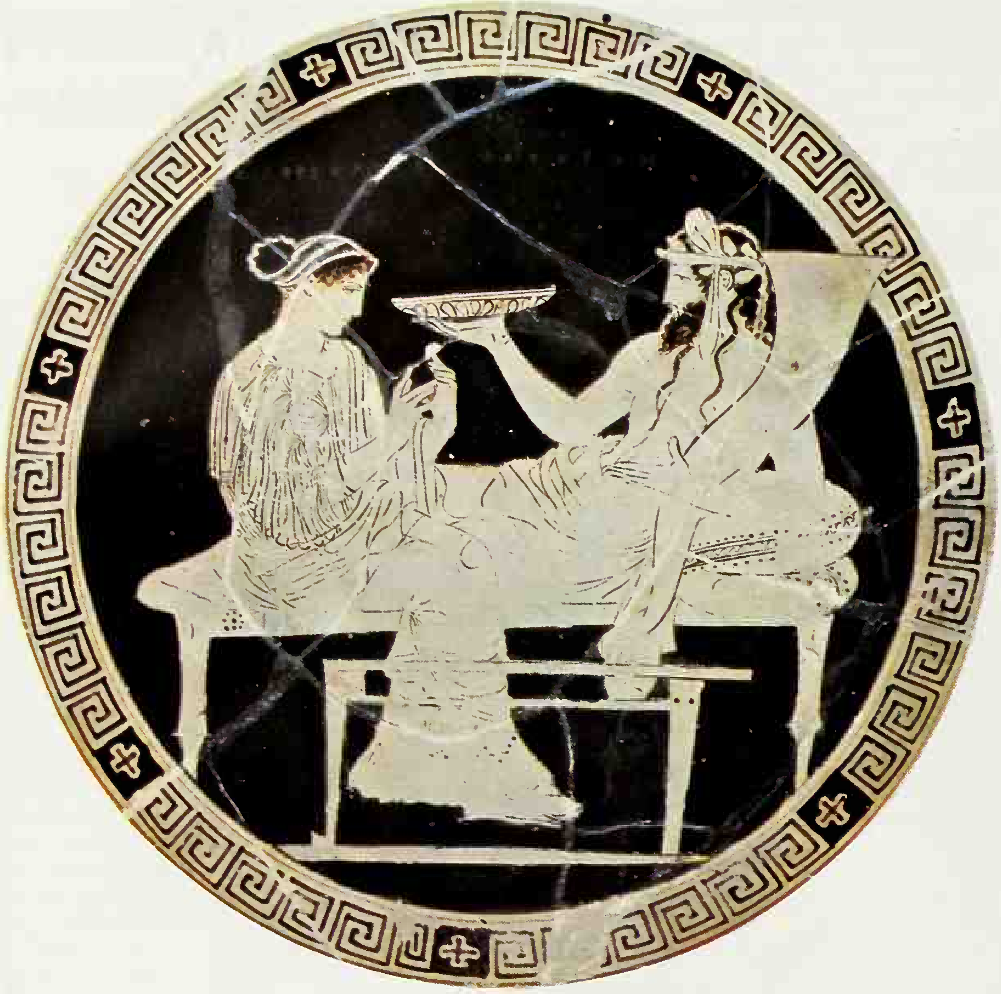
Persephone was playing as a maiden away from her mother on the Nysian plain in a meadow with the daughters of Ocean. As they were gathering flowers, she came upon the narcissus, a marvellous radiant flower, and reached for it with both hands. At this, the earth suddenly opened and Aidoneus (Hades) sprang out with his golden chariot and immortal horses. He caught her up and carried her away across the world and down to the infernal regions

The queen of the underworld, Persephone (*right*) was also the daughter of the corn goddess Demeter. She was abducted by her uncle, Hades, who carried her away to his infernal kingdom in his golden chariot: (*below*) The *Rape of Persephone* by C. Schwartz



The Syndics of Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Spectrum Colour Library/G. Tomsich



Persephone banqueting with Hades; she may have been descended from a pre-Greek goddess of the underworld: figured plate of the 5th century BC

Michael Holford

while she lamented and cried shrilly upon her father Zeus. But no one heard her except Hecate in her cave and the sun god Helios, until Demeter too heard when it was too late. Demeter was led by Hecate to Helios, who alone had seen how her daughter had disappeared, and the sun god tried to comfort Demeter by saying that Aidoneus, brother of Zeus, was no unworthy husband.

A Pomegranate Seed

Demeter in her wanderings arrived at Eleusis, disguised as an old woman. There she nursed the king's child, warming him in the ashes of the fire to make him immortal, until she was discovered doing so by the queen. She then revealed herself as a goddess and a temple was built for her at Eleusis, where the goddess of crops sat mourning, making a dreadful year for mortals during which nothing grew. Finally Zeus sent Hermes to order Aidoneus to restore Persephone, so that the human race should not perish. Aidoneus obeyed, but gave Persephone a pomegranate seed to eat, and Hermes brought her back to Demeter in the chariot of Aidoneus. Demeter, as she held Persephone in her arms, felt a misgiving and asked her whether she had tasted any food down below. If she had done so, she must spend a third of every year among the dead. Zeus confirmed that she should spend this period of time in the underworld and the rest among the gods.

The Nysian plain has a name that is otherwise associated with Dionysus, whose sacred mountain was Nysa. For this reason some scholars have argued that Aidoneus in the Hymn is another name for Dionysus, who had connections with the underworld.

The place where Aidoneus's chariot descended is variously given according to local cults of Persephone. In Attic cult it was Erineos, the place of the wild fig tree by the river Cephisus near Eleusis. This tree had a connection with the subterranean Dionysus. Though the Hymn has a special link with the cult of Demeter at Eleusis, Enna in the heart of Sicily became in later literature a favourite scene for the rape, for it had a native Sicilian cult of the infernal powers.

Variations on the Myth

Less well-known is the myth of Theseus and Pirithous, who made an expedition to the underworld in the hope that Persephone could replace Pirithous's lost wife.

Nonnus, an epic poet of the 5th century AD, retails, perhaps with some additions, an Orphic myth outside traditional lore. Persephone, kept at home by her mother but desired by all the gods, was conveyed to Sicily and there guarded by dragons, until Zeus himself, taking the form of a dragon, seduced her. She became the mother of Zagreus, the earlier form of Dionysus, whom the Titans tore to pieces.

Commentators have pointed out that the myth of Persephone is the sacred story that accompanies the ritual of sowing corn. Demeter is the corn mother, representing the seed corn that is stored underground during the deadening heat of summer, until it is brought out again in the autumn, is sown, and sprouts. The sprouting is the return of Persephone the Maiden. Demeter and Persephone are in a sense one, as the growing corn that vanishes and reappears. (See also DEMETER; ELEUSIS; PLUTO.)

E.D. PHILLIPS

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The Indians say that unless a man is morally upright he cannot use peyote; for the cactus which brings visions is regarded as a teacher, healer and saviour of their race

PEYOTE CULTS

TODAY the peyote religion is the principal cult among North American Indians in the United States, although it exists in many variants. It appears to have begun, at least in the form in which it now flourishes, about the year 1870, since when it has spread rapidly from Texas and the South-West among the Plains tribes and into Canada. There is some evidence that a religious cult centring on the use of peyote, which is the button of a cactus plant native to Texas and northern Mexico, existed in pre-Columbian times, but whether the contemporary peyote religion is directly derived from those practices is disputed.

What is certain is that hallucinatory substances were used in ritual practices by Indians observed by the Spanish invaders, and also that there was considerable non-ritual use of peyote. It was used as protector in war, perhaps to confer invulnerability, and it was carried in the 'war bundles' (collections of objects believed to have magical power) of tribes such as the Comanches and Shawnees. Among the Mescalero Apache rival shamans would use peyote in their 'witching' practices, but there was no cultic use of the plant. On the contrary, the peyote cult, as it developed after 1870, includes many elements of which there is no earlier record, and this may be said, even without referring to the more explicitly Christian elements of the cult.

The term peyote has been used of a number of plants and sometimes peyote has been confused with mescal. But the mescal bean (*Sophora secundiflora*) is quite distinct from the peyote button (*Lophophora Williamsii Lemaire*), a small spineless cactus, of which the flowering tops are used in the peyote cult. The exact properties of the peyote button have been subject to dispute; some regard it as both a narcotic and an intoxicant. It is non-habit forming. In some American states it has been prohibited, in others early prohibition has later been lifted. Some writers have maintained that peyote was a 'giver of visions', others have disputed this and suggested that peyote simply enhanced perception, particularly of colours. Nausea sometimes follows its use, but some users find that it gives a sense of exhilaration, mental ease and a feeling of greater mental capacity. The Indians themselves attribute great power to the button, and those who practise the cult regard it as a healer, and perhaps even as a saviour of the Indian peoples.

Religion of the Oppressed

Although it seems likely that the peyote cult in its modern form originated in the 1870s, its history is well-documented only from 1890. This was the year of the great Ghost Dance, a native movement which spread across the American plains from the west of Nevada. There Wovoka, an Indian messiah, had prophesied the return of the ancestors and the old way of life if Indians would but dance for several successive nights particular steps that had been revealed to him in a vision. The Ghost Dance had been carried from tribe to tribe by messengers, and the severely deprived Plains tribes, living in reservations and defeated in war against the whites, seized the new message of hope eagerly. The buffalo herds, on which they had lived and which had been of fundamental economic and religious importance to them, had been destroyed, and their way of life had collapsed. The messianic message was a call to action for thousands of hopeless tribesmen. Out of their common condition emerged a new sense of what it meant to be, not a tribesman, but an Indian. (See also GHOST DANCE.)

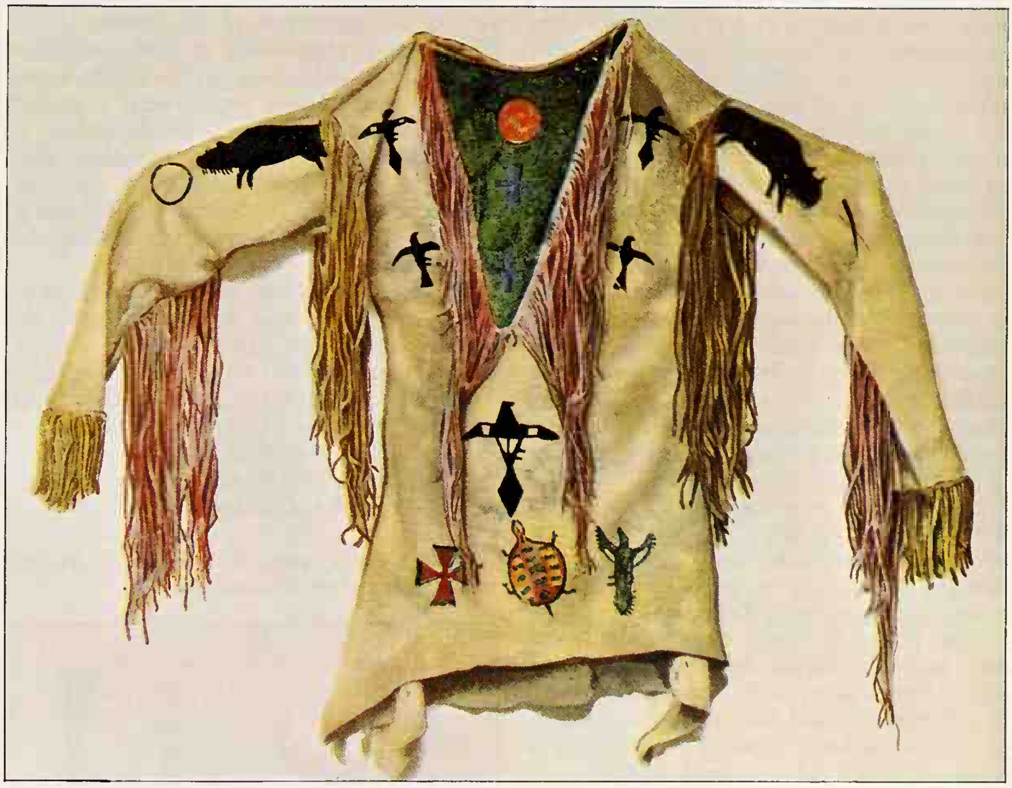
The fervour with which the Ghost Dance was performed led to trances and visions concerning the destruction of the whites. However, when the ancestors failed to return, despair and disillusionment followed. The way was now open for a less ecstatic cult that could build on the new inter-tribal sense of identity of the Indian peoples. Peyotism emerged as the new faith and many were quickly drawn to it. It did not promise an apocalypse, but was a more withdrawn response to distress.

Many elements of cult practice may already have been in existence before the coming of the Ghost Dance to the Wichita agency in Oklahoma in 1890; it was here that James Mooney, the government ethnologist, first saw the peyote cult in 1891. Certainly one of the prominent leaders of the Ghost Dance, Nishkuntu (Moon Head), also known as John Wilson, a part Delaware, part Caddo and part French Indian, became the individual who can be most specifically identified as a founder and disseminator of the new faith. Though peyotism did not originate with him, and its mythology goes back much further, the spread of the contemporary cult and some of its principal characteristics are connected with his name.

The Kiowa form of the peyote cult differs from the rite as disseminated by John Wilson, however, and may be more original. The central myth concerning peyote is usually recounted in the version accepted by the Kiowa. The story is of two lost warriors of the tribe who were sought by a relative, usually a sister. When she failed to find them and lay down exhausted on the ground, realizing that she too was now lost, she dreamed a dream that in the morning she would find help at hand. On waking she found the peyote plant. Severely hungry, she ate the peyote button and at once had a vision that enabled her to find her brothers. The myth of peyote as a saviour of the Indian is supported by stories of this kind.

All-Night Songs

Peyote cult ritual varies considerably from tribe to tribe, and perhaps from meeting to meeting. Despite the emergence of a church organization, uniformity has never been established. Particular practitioners have their own versions, and meetings are called for different purposes in different areas. Meetings are normally called by a sponsor who wishes to obtain healing, or to express gratitude for recovery from illness,



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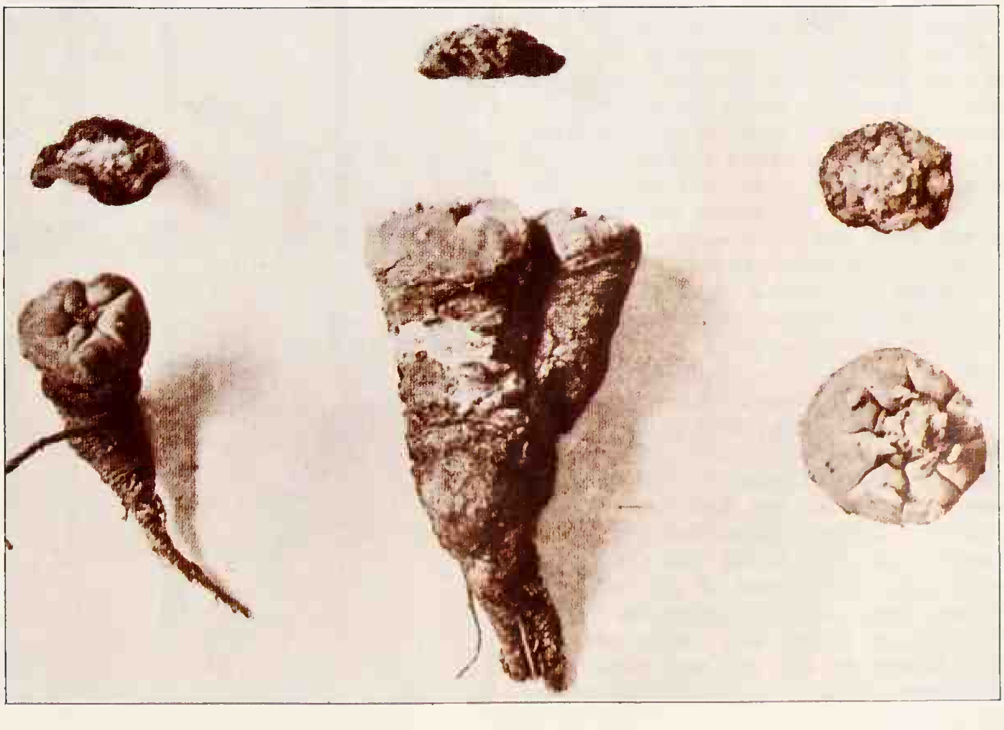

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The Ghost Dance, by developing a new inter-tribal sense of identity among the Indian peoples, opened the way for the peyote cult, a more passive response to oppression *Above right* Arapaho 'ghost shirt' believed to render the wearer immune to bullets *Below right* Peyote plant: the cult is 'in many ways a religion of withdrawal and submission' which 'encourages resigned contemplation'

or to celebrate a child's birthday, to obtain a prophecy or to manifest piety. In the tribes among whom peyotism was first established, women are often excluded from meetings. Among those who have acquired it more recently, and where it has a more Christian appearance, they are usually admitted, even though they do not always fully participate. Indians of all tribes are welcome at meetings, and visits from different tribes are common, since one of the features of peyotism that has continued since its early days is the eagerness of its practitioners to learn from others.

The sponsor of a meeting meets the expenses, and often supplies the peyote itself; he invites the Chief (or Roadman) who presides over the ceremony, and who may conduct it with variations according to some vision that he has received. An altar is prepared, traditionally in a tepee or tent, and objects of symbolic importance are placed upon it. Of particular importance are the drum, the staff and feathers. The all-night ceremony begins with smoking and praying to the earth-creator, and this is followed by a ritual of blessing around the ceremonial fire. The consumption of four (or sometimes more) peyote buttons by every participant is the most important act of the ceremony, but the night is taken up by the singing of songs. Each individual sings four, choosing a friend to drum for him, whilst he holds the staff. In some cases ritual songs are sung by the Roadman. Songs sung by individuals have, perhaps increasingly, some resemblance to Christian hymns. At midnight a special song is sung, and water is brought and drunk. The meeting then returns to singing until dawn, when water is brought again, by a woman, and four morning songs are sung by the leader.

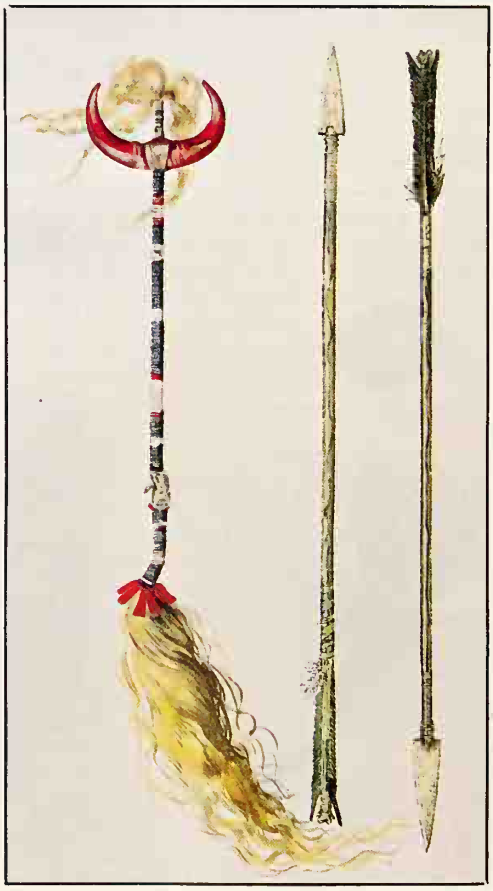
The principal object of meetings, however, is contemplation, and there is a strong ethical implication to the eating of peyote. It is frequently said that a man cannot use peyote unless he is 'straight'. Sometimes it is asserted that peyote causes vomiting and that this is a way in which men learn wisdom. Invariably, peyote is regarded as a teacher, and if the meaning of the ceremonies and the songs is difficult to articulate, it is said to be so because only by knowing the 'peyote road', by long experience of the cult, and by having a clean heart and living the life of a devoted man can an individual learn the peyote message. The peyote road can be a severe one: John Wilson, for example, exhorted his followers to abstain from alcohol, fighting, gambling, sexual excess, witchcraft and love magic. There is a strong sense in which peyotism provides a new ethic and offers social integration for a demoralized people.

The spread of the peyote religion among the tribes has been fairly fully traced. Like the Ghost Dance, its dissemination was facilitated by the American policy of collecting different tribes together on the reservations. The Kiowa and Comanches were early practitioners of the cult. John Wilson spread the cult among the Caddo, Wichita and Osage, and a more conservative variant of the cult was maintained (in strong opposition to John Wilson) among the Delaware. The Winnebago in Nebraska and the Iowa tribe were visited by peyote practitioners before the First World War, and the movement spread among the Ute. It made steady advance among the Taos Indians, and by the Second World War was spreading among the Crow and Blackfoot in Canada.

The Navaho for a long time remained relatively untouched by peyotism, although they certainly knew of it from quite an early date from their contact with the Ute shamans. The reason for their lack of interest appears to have been the relative comfort of this largest of all American Indian peoples. Unlike other tribes they had lost little of their traditional lands; they had never been forced onto the reservations; and as sheep farmers, they were unaffected by the disappearance of the buffalo. After the imposed programme of stock reduction (because of over-grazing) in the 1930s, some Navaho undoubtedly experienced a period of economic distress and hopelessness. It was after this time that peyotism first made a significant number of converts among them until, today, it has become a thriving cult with thousands of Navaho adherents.

Among the Navaho, as among many other tribes, peyotism was at first opposed by traditionalists who saw the peyote cult as a departure from true tribal culture. Today peyotism meets opposition both from conservative tribalists and from the small group of more educated Indians who have adapted more fully to white standards and see it as evidence of backwardness.

Sacred objects used by the Sioux in the performance of the Ghost Dance



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Peyote Christianized

Even though it cannot be claimed as a remnant of indigenous Indian culture, there is no doubt that peyotism is a native religious movement. Some of its advocates have said that the white man has the Bible (or Jesus) and the Indian has peyote. Others have attempted to assimilate peyotism to Christianity in various ways, and present it as a variant of the Christian faith.

It met the opposition of the Department of Indian Affairs at an early date, and the consumption of the drug was prohibited by a number of states (Oklahoma in 1899, California, Nevada and Utah in 1917, and several other states at later dates). In response to this pattern of persecution, the votaries of peyote saw the necessity of organizing themselves as a recognized Church, a pattern that had been successfully established by the Indian Shaker Church in Oregon some years before. A group of Oto registered the Firstborn Church of Christ in 1914 in Oklahoma.

A larger, inter-tribal movement was established in 1918 as the Native American Church. This organization, in contrast to the Firstborn Church, emphasized the use of peyote as its explicit purpose in an article which declared: 'The purpose for which this corporation is formed is to foster and promote the religious belief of the several tribes of Indians in the State of Oklahoma, in the Christian religion with the practice of the Peyote sacrament as commonly understood and used among the adherents of this religion . . . The organization became a national organization in 1944, and an international organization (to embrace Canada) in 1955.

The movement has accelerated the trend towards the Christianization of peyotism. Peyote is said to be used as a sacrament; the Trinity is invoked; the Bible is placed on the altar, and various scriptural references to a Comforter and the use of herbs and roots are invoked in defence of peyotism. Some apologists use Romans, chapter 14, verses 1–3, as a particular defence, implying that Indians are weak and cannot take the strong meat suitable for white Christians.

Certainly peyotism is in many ways a religion of withdrawal and submission. It encourages resigned contemplation, and the maintenance of an Indian tradition and an Indian way of life. By exhorting sobriety, high moral standards and personal decorum, it offers the Indian dignity in defeat, and simultaneously serves as an agency of adjustment to the dominant white culture. For people with little access to, or little faith in, white medical practice, it offers a system of curing which has at least continuity with traditional practice, much as it may differ in detail. The primary function of peyote itself is undoubtedly the provision of solace and the escape into dreams from the particular miseries of a demoralized people and a dying indigenous culture.

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